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Building Bridges to Primary Education in Mauritius?
Emergent Literacy Experiences in a Foreign
Language Context:
A Case Study of Preschool Children

Ambarin Mooznah **Auleear Owodally**

Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
School of Education
Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

SEPTEMBER 2007

Supervisors: Emeritus Professor D. N. Young
Dr L. Abel

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisors, Emeritus Professor Douglas Young and Dr. Lydia Abel, for their help and support. Special thanks go to Professor Young for having agreed to supervise this thesis long-distance and on a split-site basis. I would also like to thank the University of Cape Town for having provided library facilities, access to some of its database from Mauritius, and accommodation during my library visit in July 2006. Thanks to Julie Van der Vlugt, who was always supportive in times of panic.

My heartfelt gratitude and respect go to my husband, Ryaad, for having provided unflinching love and support throughout these five years. His utmost confidence in me was invaluable in times of fatigue and discouragement. I will always remember all the mornings when he took time off work to video-record my sessions at PSB. I am also thankful to my children, Afifah and Raniyah, who grew up with the work here presented. They are the reason for which I started working on this topic and they have been my source of inspiration. No words can express my gratitude to my dad, mum and sister, who kindly looked after my children when I had to work. Special thanks to my dad, who accompanied me on my first library visit to UCT in 2003, to look after my daughter, myself and the little one playing in my tummy. He never said “no” to reading and re-reading my drafts. Thanks to my sister for all the technical support. A special thought for my Nani, who has always prayed for me.

I am indebted to all my subjects: headmasters, teachers, parents, children, the ECD coordinator and all the teacher-educator-supervisors working at the PSTF. Although it would be unethical for me to name them, they have a special place in my heart. Thank-you to Mrs Joseph for having reviewed the oral English test and for having allowed me to pilot test in her preschool.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Ms Vina Ballgobin and Ms Veena Dabydoyal who helped me during data collection and analysis; to Dr Sheila Wong and Mr Mithileswar Banymandhub for having proofread parts of my thesis; to Dr Catherine Boudet for having helped with the page set-up; to Zakkiyah Nazroo and Shahana Auleear for having helped draw Test 2 for me; and to Irshad Alleear for having scanned my letters. This work would have been colourless had it not been for Deven Marianen’s help. I realise the time and energy he put into making photos from my videos. Thanks also Rishi Boodhna for his precious assistance when it came to computers. Thank-you to Associate Professor Tirvassen for having provided articles in times of panic, and for having boosted my self-confidence.

This work would have been impossible without the support of my institution, the University of Mauritius, which gave me the opportunity to work on a reduced workload so that I could complete this doctoral research. I would be ungrateful if I were not to thank friends and colleagues from the University of Mauritius, especially friends of the Department of English Studies. They never refused me their support and help when I knocked at their door.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the ones closest to my heart:
Ryaad, Afifah, Raniyah
Pa, Ma, Shahana

Thank you for being...

University of Cape Town

Abstract

In the context where English, as a foreign language, is the main language of literacy and the written medium of instruction throughout the Mauritian education system, this thesis explores (1) preschoolers' early literacy experiences, (2) the outcomes of these experiences, and (3) the extent to which these experiences prepare them to use English in Standard 1. The theoretical and empirical research on emergent literacy, second/foreign language learning and teaching, second/foreign language literacy instruction and new literacies was reviewed in order to find some "anchor points" (Hamilton, 2006) in the literature. These "anchor points" guided this exploratory study on emergent/early literacy experiences in a multilingual context. After a pilot study, I embarked on a yearlong case study of a group of preschool children and their teachers using an ethnographic approach. Throughout 2005, I observed teachers' pedagogical practices, and interviewed teachers and parents. I also designed a test to assess the children's progress in oral English and literacy over their final preschool year. Run in parallel to the main study, a quasi-experiment, involving the teaching of oral English to a comparable group of preschoolers, was carried out. While inductive analysis was used to analyse the observational and interview data, paired and independent t-tests were used to assess and compare the children's oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing development in the two settings.

The findings indicate that, although there are many similarities between the preschool and the home in terms of children's early experiences with oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing, the preschool remains the main site where most children are introduced to oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing. At the preschool, teachers use mainly code-switching to teach the oral version of the Standard 1 Maths and Environmental Studies syllabus, leading to children's limited proficiency in oral English. Teachers also use the copying strategy to teach children pre-writing. This results in children's ability to recite the alphabet and write down their names. However, this copying does not seem to develop the children's familiarity with the alphabet. As far as exposure to reading is concerned, children are rarely exposed to reading in the preschool and the home. This might explain their lack of interest in print-related activities. These findings are explained in terms of the remnant effects of a colonial language policy, the vague curriculum guidelines, the inadequate teacher training and some particularities of the local culture. This thesis, thus, argues that the children-subjects are inadequately prepared to make the transition to Standard 1, where English has a prominent place. However, the quasi-experiment indicates that if children are exposed to English daily and in a structured manner, their oral English proficiency can improve significantly, providing a more solid foundation for the development of English literacy. In the light of the findings from the main study and experiment, this thesis makes recommendations to the Ministry of Education.

Executive Summary

In Mauritius, very few children speak English as mother tongue. Still, all children have to attend primary school where English is the main language of literacy and the only written medium of instruction. This mismatch between the home language and the language of primary education has exerted pressure on the preschool sector to mediate between the two, as evidenced in the 2003 Preschool Curriculum Guidelines (2003PPG), which acknowledges the importance of English in the preschool sector.

In view of the place of English in the 2003PPG, a cross sectional pilot study was carried out in 2004, with the aim to investigate whether children are exposed to oral English in their final year at preschool. The observations flowing from the pilot study were:

- the exposure to oral English was characterized by rote repetition of a limited number of words;
- oral English and pre-reading/writing were intricately linked.

In the context of such preliminary observations, the thesis set itself the aim to explore the role of the preschool in preparing learners for formal schooling and literacy in an FL, by considering the factors impacting on and resulting from the emergent literacy experiences of preschool children, in the year preceding their entrance into the formal world of education.

Following my contextual review of preschool literacy experiences in a number of post-colonial settings, I engaged myself in a critical review of the literature on emergent literacy, second/foreign language learning, teaching and reading, and new literacies. This review provided the anchor points for my own research, which was designed to consist of three phases:

- Phase 1: I focused on the main documents relevant to preschool education in Mauritius: the pre-primary curricula and the related teacher training course manuals;
- Phase 2:
 - I used an ethnographic approach to the case study to characterise and explain the practices related to the exposure to oral English and literacy by pre-school teachers in one preschool (PSA), while taking into account teachers' beliefs about and attitudes to English and literacy at pre-primary level, as well as their own proficiency in English and their own literacy practices;
 - I also considered the role of the PSA children's home background on their early oral English/literacy development. Using parent interviews, I sought to characterise PSA children's exposure to oral English and literacy in their home background and its possible impact on their early literacy development;
 - Finally, using a test designed for the purpose of this thesis, I established the development in level of proficiency in oral English and literacy over PSA children's final preschool year, in relation to the specifications of the 2003PPG and the requirements of the Standard 1 syllabus;

- Phase 3: This phase was run simultaneously to Phase 2, and constituted a quasi-experimental design, which involved an *Oral English Intervention Programme*. This intervention programme was run with a group of children in a similar school (PSB) as the children involved in Phase 2, to consider the desirability of an enriched oral English programme in the local context.

The analysis of the data gathered from teachers, parents and pupils in PSA, indicated that:

- The preschool is the main location where children are introduced to oral English;
- Teachers use verbal strategies, like code-switching and questioning, as the main oral English language teaching strategy;
- The final preschool year focuses on a preparation for Std1. This preschool/home preparation is narrowly defined in terms of doing the oral English version of the Maths/Environmental Studies Std1 textbooks, with far less attention being given to developing oral proficiency in English as a stepping-stone into the world of literacy in English. This results in children's progress in oral English over the year, but this progress is determined by the progress made in the Maths and EVS vocabulary;
- Although teachers immerse the children in print, they (parents, too) tend to use a discrete-skills-based approach to initiate children into pre-reading/writing. Although children can recite the alphabet, they show more discomfort with recognising the letter-grapheme relationship;
- The copying strategy is extensively used, resulting in children's ability to write their names at the end of the year;
- There is a near-absence of storybook reading at home and at the preschool, resulting in children's limited interest in literacy-related activities;
- The quasi-experiment indicates that when daily exposed to English in a structured manner, children can make significant overall progress in English. Moreover, regular storybook reading in English seems to have medium impact on children's interest in print-related activities.

These practices have been explained by:

- the colonial heritage of Mauritius: the curriculum and the teacher-training course have been written in the shadow of a colonial language policy;
- the inadequate teacher training, which does not equip teachers with the knowledge and methodology to teach English and literacy to preschoolers, in the specific local context,
- external pressures, such as parental pressures, which impact upon teachers' practices;
- internal forces which shape teachers' pedagogical practices. For instance, teacher use their own experience as language learners to teach English.

In sum, this thesis argues that, for a number of reasons, preschoolers are inadequately prepared to meet the English language and literacy challenges awaiting them in Standard 1. In the light of such a conclusion, this thesis recommends that there be harmony and

coherence between the preschool and the primary school sectors, in terms of language policy, curriculum and pedagogical practices:

- the language-in-education policy, applicable to the whole education system, should be unambiguously articulated;
- the curriculum should be precise in acknowledging the functions of the various languages in the local context;
- the curriculum should define the language and literacy targets for preschoolers exiting the preschool;
- the teacher-training course should be reviewed to be more context- and more sociolinguistic-sensitive;
- teachers should be provided with English language training;
- appropriate materials should be designed and provided to preschools.

This thesis has contributed to research by providing insight and understanding into emergent literacy experiences of children who live in a context where their home language differs from their school language. It has also enlightened us on the nature of the oral English and the literacy gap at the point when (Mauritian) children make the transition from the preschool into the primary school.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1997PPG	<i>The 1997 Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines</i>
2003PPG	<i>The 2003 Pre-School Programme Guidelines</i>
C1, C2...	Teacher's Certificate Manuals, in the order in which they appear in Appendix E.3
C2005	<i>Curriculum 2005</i> , South Africa
CH	Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis
CLT	Communicative language teaching
CMI	Chinese medium school (Hong Kong)
COH	Swain's (1985) Comprehensible Output Hypothesis
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in Education
DML	Desired Mastery Level
DoE	Department of Education
EBRR	Evidence-Based Reading Research movement
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EL	Emergent Literacy
ELC	Essential Learning Competencies
EMI	English medium school (Hong Kong)
ESL	English as a Second Language
EVS	Environmental Studies
FAPEC	Federation des associations de Parents et Enseignants des Ecoles Catholiques
FL	Foreign language, defined by Kramsch (2000: 314) as "languages learned in schools that are removed from any natural context in use".
FPSP	Federation of Pre-School Playgroups
HE	Home environment
HL	Home language
HLE	Home literacy environment
HSC	Cambridge Higher School Certificate
IRA	International Reading Association
Kreol	The usual spelling for the French-based Creole that is spoken in Mauritius
L2	Second language
LiEP	Language-in-education policy
Ln	Language N: Any language other than the L1
LoL	Language of literacy
MCA	Mauritius College of the Air
MES	Mauritius Examinations Syndicate
MIE	The Mauritius Institute of Education
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement

MML	Minimum Mastery Level
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoI	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother tongue
NCCRD	National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NLS	New Literacy Studies
OMEP	Organisation Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire .
OEIP	Oral English Intervention Programme
OL	Oriental language(s)
P1, P2, ...	Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education, in the order in which they appear in Appendix E.3
PA	Phonological/Phonemic Awareness
PCLE	Preschool Classroom Literacy Environment
PPU	Pre-primary Unit
PSA	Pre-School A
PSB	Pre-School B
PSTF	The Pre-School Trust Fund
RQ	Research question
RNCS	2002 <i>Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9</i> , South Africa
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SC	Cambridge School Certificate
SES	Socio-economic status
SLA	Second language acquisition
Std	Standard. For instance, Std 1 is the first year of primary education.
SRQ	Sub research question
T1, T2, T3	Key informants (teachers) from PSA
TES	Teacher Educator/Supervisor.
TPR	Total Physical Response
TT	Teacher Training
TTM	Teacher training manuals from the accredited MIE?MCA course
ZEP	Zone d'éducation prioritaire (priority educational zones)

Note on Mauritius

The Republic of Mauritius is an island nation, off the south coast of the African continent, in the south west Indian Ocean. There was no indigenous population in Mauritius, but a history of French and British colonisation brought different peoples to Mauritius: French and British colonisers, African and Malagasy slaves, Indian indentured labourers and Chinese traders. With all these people coming together over a relatively short period of time (some three hundred years), Mauritius has become a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual nation. Today, some 1.2 million Mauritians live together in relative harmony. In terms of languages, English is the *de facto* official language, French is the social language of prestige and the predominant language of the media, Kreol is the local *lingua franca*, and a number of oriental languages are seen as markers of ethnic and religious identity.

Mauritius was traditionally largely agrarian, depending mainly on its sugar industry for its economic survival. With the recent drastic fall in the price of sugar, sugar is no longer a viable source of income for Mauritius. In the past ten years, Mauritius has diversified its economic activities. There has been a slow but firm shift towards financial services. In 2002, the ICT sector was launched. The 'duty-free island' concept was announced in 2004 and this is slowly being implemented. In 2006, laws were changed to facilitate and encourage business activities in Mauritius (Owodally, 2006). The Human Development Report (2007-2008 ranks Mauritius 65th on HDI (0.804), 70th on life expectancy (72.4 years), 78th on adult literacy (84.3%), 77th on educational enrolment (75.3%) and 52nd on GDP per capita (\$12 715).

Mauritius has limited natural resources and with the conditions created by globalisation, Mauritius has to compete with developed and developing nations. In this context, human capital is the pillar upon which the Mauritian economy rests. Education is the basis of human development in Mauritius.

CHAPTER 1

Background to study

1.1 Introduction

According to 2006 UN Report, although enrolment in primary education in sub-Saharan Africa progressed from 53% in 1990 - 1991 to 64% in 2000, the region is still lagging behind in its race to attain one of the eight Millennium Development Goals, which is to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Similarly, the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2005: 30) states that the greatest proportion of the world's 771 million illiterate adults are found in sub-Saharan Africa. Achieving universal primary education, eradicating illiteracy and raising literacy levels are significant concerns of this region as articulated in the six EFA (Education For All) Dakar goals, adopted in 2000 by 164 countries at the World Education Forum in Dakar. However, the UNESCO Report (2005: 145) claims that two of the most neglected of the EFA goals are:

Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

Goal 4: Achieving 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

The aim of this thesis is to address two of the most neglected of the EFA goals: **early childhood education**¹ (ECE) and **literacy**² in one sub-Saharan African country, Mauritius.

¹ According to Pence (2004: 5), various terms are used to refer to the holistic intent embraced by early childhood care, education and development. Some of them are Early Childhood Care and Education/ECCE (UNESCO), Early Childhood Education and Care/ECEC (OECD); Early Childhood Development/ECD (World Bank, ADEA). Early childhood education is the subject of the coming 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report.

² The importance of literacy is apparent in the context of the United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012 and the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment 2005-2015.

1.2 Early childhood education: One avenue towards improving educational quality

Although the work of theorists like Piaget (1971) and Vygotsky (1978) has acknowledged the importance of the preschool years in a child's physical, motor, social, cognitive and linguistic development (Trawick-Smith, 1997), the preschool phase has been relatively under-researched compared with later stages of schooling until recently in the developed countries (Wood, 2004). Recent developments in early childhood research have however pointed towards early childhood education as a possible route to improving children's educational quality.

Research indicates that quality childcare centres have a positive impact on child language and early academic development (Barnett *et al.*, 2007; Burchinal *et al.*, 2000; Gormley *et al.*, 2005; Magnuson *et al.*, 2004, 2007; NICHD ECCRN, 2002; Peisner-Feinberg *et al.*, 2001; Pozner, 1983; Puma *et al.*, 2005; Raudenbush *et al.*, 1991). ECE has thus acquired a new role, to "build bridges between home and school" (Etse, 2006: 10). In this context, efforts have been made to improve and increase children's access to education by raising the quality of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes, in order to make children ready for primary school. Scott-Little *et al.* (2006: 154) describe "readiness for school" as specific skills (physical, intellectual and/or social) or knowledge associated with success in school during the early years (also LoCasale-Crouch *et al.*, 2007). In countries like the United States, children's readiness for school is being defined through the development of early learning standards. The American Government has also focused on the preschool period as an important time for early identification of children who may show slow development of cognitive skills (Molfese *et al.*, 2006), in the light of the lack of progress in student performance in reading between 1990 and 2003. Another such initiative is seen in programmes like *Head Start*³ that have been initiated with the aim to intervene in (disadvantaged) children's education as early as preschool level.

A look at ECE in developing countries indicates that in 2003 - 2004, only 34.3% of children in developing countries were enrolled in preschool programmes as compared

³ Other intervention programmes like *Success for All* and *Reading Recovery* (Leslie & Allen, 1999) are concerned with Grade 1.

with 81.1% in developed countries (UNESCO, 2005, Annex 1). In these recently-independent, developing African contexts, governments have concentrated on providing universal primary education and improving primary education (Lee *et al.*, 2005), rather than on offering pre-primary education because they have had to face harsh and adverse economic, social, and political environments. Governments have also assumed that the political and economic returns from investing in young children are lower than those from investing in school age children (UNESCO, 2005: 28). Hence, despite the importance of preschool years in an individual's later development, governments in developing countries have spent little time, energy and resources on preschool education (and research into the area), leaving preschool children to the care of families and local communities.

The few preschools existing in the developing world (Pence, 2004) indicate that children having attended preschool perform better at primary level (Evans, 2002; WHO, 1999) than children not having attended preschool, suggesting that preschool education facilitates the transition into primary school (Wood, 2004: 367). Similarly, as a result of a study of Gradel Brazilian children, which indicated that maternal education and books found in homes positively impacted on children's early literacy development, Fuller *et al.* (1999: 24) suggest that "early intervention at the preschool level may broaden the positive early learning effects now disproportionately realised for children with better educated mothers." Although the Fuller *et al.* study can be critiqued for adopting a deficiency approach, it nevertheless indicates that some children are better prepared to embrace primary school education than others. Unless something is done, the education system will continue to perpetuate the gap existing between socio-economic groups, disadvantaging lower socio-economic groups.

Growing increasingly conscious of the importance of preschool education for children's later (educational) development, Myers (1995, cited in Aboud, 2006) suggests that preschool programmes for high-risk children become a priority in developing countries, while Schiefelbein (1988, cited in Myers, 1992: 254) suggests a Year 0 in primary school as a compulsory preparation for primary education. Some countries have already taken

concrete steps. For instance, the Namibian government has made a 10-week bridging syllabus part of the Primary1 syllabus (Ashby, 2002), and South Africa has included a compulsory Reception Year in the *2002 Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9* (2002RNCS) - this is currently being implemented. Countries like Benin, Togo and Nigeria have adjusted their language-in-education policies (LiEPs) to include the use of African languages at preschool level. However, in the case of Nigeria, the implementation of this LiEP has proved problematic because of the limited regulatory influence of the government and the personal choice of parents to send their children to private English medium preschools.

In the context of the EFA goal of expanding and improving early childhood education (ECE), as well as the research of the positive impact of ECE on children's overall development, I am going to consider, in this thesis, the preschool as one possible avenue to address the challenge of improving educational quality.

1.3 Literacy levels in Mauritius

As well as improving ECE, enhancing literacy levels is also on the agenda of the EFA goals. Large-scale studies, such as *Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA)* and *SACMEQ*, have enlightened us on the literacy levels and the quality of education in a number of sub-Saharan countries, like Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa and Swaziland.

Compared with her sub-Saharan neighbours, Mauritius seems to be faring well in literacy in quantitative terms. The general level of literacy has increased consistently over the past two decades, moving from 77% in the early 1980s to approximately 85% in the early 21st century (2003SACMEQ). Although the reliability of such quantitative data has been questioned (Wagner, 2003: 296), the 2000 Population Census indicates that only some 14.4% of the resident Mauritian population aged 12 years and over is illiterate, compared with around 60% illiteracy levels in countries like Benin, Burkina Faso, Sénégal and Sierra Leone (ADEA, 2006: 6). The MLA and SACMEQ studies, carried out among upper primary school goers, nonetheless reveal that it is important to consider the quality of the literacy skills that Mauritian students acquire. For instance, the 2000MLA data

indicate that 77.6% Std4 pupils achieved Minimum Mastery Level (MML), compared to only some 35.4% achieved the Desired Mastery Level (DML). Likewise, the 2003SACMEQ data indicate that no more than 26.3% of Std6 pupils were capable of complex reading levels (analytical reading and critical reading). Such a trend is not particular to Mauritius though: Mothibele's (2005) analysis of all SACMEQ reports indicates that 44% of learners across the sub-Saharan region achieve the minimum level of reading, while only 14.6% attain the desired level of reading in Grade6.

The MLA, SACMEQ, and Certificate for Primary Education (CPE)⁴ annual reports refer to the low level of educational quality, the language teaching and language mastery, as some of the factors hindering the optimal development of reading beyond basic word recognition and literal meaning. This directs the present study to reflect on issues of literacy, and more specifically on issues early literacy development given my focus on the preschool as one possible avenue to improving educational quality.

1.4 A working description of literacy

In an increasingly (multi-)literate world, literacy is the individual's goal and the nation's aspiration. At an individual level, literacy is an essential skill for academic development and academic achievement (Paris, 2005: 184; Poe *et al.*, 2004: 315). In popular discourse, literacy is connected with social and professional upward mobility. However, since possession of literacy does not in itself guarantee any individual access to work, the connection between literacy and socio-professional mobility is over-simplistic. Nevertheless, in the new world/work order, one must admit that no literacy probably means unemployment or poorly paid employment (Christie & Mission, 1998: 6). At a national level, "literacy is a right and confers distinct benefits" which can be classified as human, political, cultural, social, and economic (UNESCO, 2005: 138-145, see also ADEA, 2006: 6-7). Literacy provides an educated workforce which can further the economic goals of the nation. Adult literacy rates are generally referred to in order to assess the level of a country's development; they are used as an output indicator of the

⁴ The CPE is the national exam carried out at the end of the primary cycle, and which determines who goes to secondary school. The % pass in the last decade has turned around 65%.

quality and effectiveness of the school system; they are associated with decreasing fertility and mortality rate, and suggestive of the level of literacy of the next generation (Verner, 2005: 3-4). In fact, Coloumbe *et al.*'s (2004: 8) international survey on adult literacy suggests that "raising the average literacy and numeracy skill level of workforce ...could yield significantly higher levels of growth per capita."

While it seems hard to dispute the benefits of literacy, the central questions remaining to be asked are: What is literacy? What does it mean to be literate? Literacy, as a concept, has proved to be both complex and dynamic. From meaning the ability to read and write one's own name in the 17th - 18th centuries, it has evolved to refer to the "ability to summarise, analyse, and evaluate texts; to use literacy to make inferences, think critically, and solve problems" (Jalongo, 2003: 152) in the 20th century. In the new era of multiliteracies (Fairclough, 2000; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000), distinctions are still being made among 'literacies' (functional, cultural, critical, technological, concept and visual literacies).⁵

In the theoretical literature on literacy, the current positions on the definitions of literacy cluster around two major dimensions, the individual dimension and the social dimension (Bloch, 2006; Perez, 2000: 26). In a seminal work, Street (1984) used the concepts of the autonomous model of literacy and the ideological model of literacy to describe these two dimensions. The individual dimension, or the autonomous conception of literacy, views literacy as the individual's ability to read and write. In this view, early literacy development is the process of learning a set of tangible and universal skills, particularly the cognitive skills of reading and writing, as the basis of later literacy development. This view seems to be dominant in current mainstream American education reports, as seen in the August and Shanahan's (2006: 1) recent definition of literacy acts as "including pre-reading skills, such as concept of print and alphabetic knowledge; word-level skills, including decoding, word reading, pseudo-word reading, and spelling; and text-level skills including fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills." Such a view reflects on the current dominant approach to literacy instruction, which in the

⁵ Refer to Lankshear & Knobel (2006: 6 – 16) for a brief history of the recent evolution of the term.

United States and Britain is presently a skills-based approach, synthetic phonics approach to literacy instruction.

However, such a conceptualisation of literacy has been problematised by Street (1984) who argues that the autonomous approach is simply imposing a Western conception of literacy on to other cultures or within a country, those of one class or cultural group. In recent times, Bloch (2006) and Street (2003) have critiqued the autonomous model because it assumes that literacy has transformative powers over people's lives such as enhancing cognitive skills of poor people and improving their chances of getting work. More sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Gee, 2000; Street, 1995) have thus been proposed to address the shortcomings of the autonomous models by considering the role of the social, cultural, and historical contexts, as well as the role of "teachers, peers and family members in mediating learning" (Moll, 1990) during the emergence and development of literacy. This social dimension of literacy, or the 'ideological model of literacy' (Street, 1985), views literacy as a social practice and emphasises that literacy uses are embedded in social contexts, in cultural norms and in discourses. Such a view inevitably considers issues of power in the larger society, issues that constrain the pedagogical actions and language choices of educators and students.

In the context of the differing conceptions of literacy, it is important to arrive at a working description of literacy that will be used as the starting point for this study, which aims to focus on the early literacy experiences of English language learners in Mauritius. At this initial phase in my study, I propose to draw upon both the individual and social approaches to literacy, instead of adopting an either-or theoretical position, to direct my understanding of literacy. Hence, I propose to start this work with the following broad principals:

- 1) Literacy skills have to be **learnt** through instruction. This perspective draws on the autonomous model of literacy, which acknowledges that learners need certain basic decoding and oral language skills in order to embark on the literacy journey. It is hardly possible to conceive of an individual ever reading and writing, if s/he does not have some knowledge of the alphabet or oral skills. While all children acquire their

- first language when they are exposed to it, few, if any children will acquire reading and writing skills in the same subconscious and natural manner. Reading and writing have to be learnt (Wren, 2002), although the degree of learning will vary from child to child. This notion of **learning** emphasises the importance of knowledgeable others in helping learners build their literacy skills. This social support has been discussed in Vygotsky's (1978) idea of zone of proximal development;
- 2) Literacy skills can be **acquired** through immersion in a social and family context where literacy is used. The ethnographic studies of Delpit (1995) and Heath (1983) have provided rich descriptions of the literacy practices which minority children are immersed in and which can impact on their learning experiences. The notion of acquisition also reminds us of Moll's (1992) "funds of knowledge" which attract attention to the fact that children can start their literacy journey with a certain literacy baggage;
 - 3) Literacy skills develop **in context**, just like reading and writing are used in context. This notion of literacy draws on Street's ideological model, a model that investigates literacy as a social and cultural practice. It also draws on critical theory (Gee, 1990), which considers how educators' decisions and choices are constrained by the context-specific power dynamics. By extension, this perspective on literacy sharpens our awareness of the sociolinguistic context in which literacy is being taught or acquired. Some of the salient characteristics of the sociolinguistic Mauritian context are that English is the main written language of institutions (including the school) and the least socially used language, but it is perceived as the stepping-stone to educational, social and professional development;
 - 4) Developing literacy skills in a **language other than children's L1** provides an extra linguistic and cognitive challenge for learners. Mauritius is a clear example of a postcolonial country where children learn to read and write in a language other than their L1. This is undeniably a challenge for the education system, the teachers and the learners. The research on early literacy development has tended to focus on first language literacy acquirers and learners (Clay, 1975; Teale & Sulzby, 1986): there has been far less research on second language learners who do not have literacy instruction in their L1 (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005: 159), and probably even less research

on foreign language learners who do not have instruction in their L1. However, Peregoy & Boyle (2005: 159) suggest that English “reading and writing development processes are essentially similar for both English learners and native English speakers.” In other words, they argue that while all learners will need to develop and use their understanding of print conventions and knowledge of the world to make sense of a written text and put their ideas on paper, English language learners will have the extra task of developing English language knowledge in order for the reading and writing processes to be meaningful. Since many language learners have not learnt to read and write in their L1, they might have to learn literacy in the second/foreign mainly through explicit instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). August & Shanahan’s (2006) report on the development of literacy in second language learners in the USA indicates that English language learners in the USA benefit from instruction in the key components of reading, as well as enhanced oral proficiency in English, precisely because of the linguistic disadvantage.

In the context where my research focuses on the early literacy development of Mauritian English language learners who are not taught to read and write in their L1, and who need basic decoding and language skills as the foundation upon which to build future reading and writing practices, I propose to use as my preliminary working description of literacy as the development of acquired and learnt skills that will provide learners with the ability to use reading and writing in their own specific social, cultural and linguistic context. This working description will support me in my search for finer conceptual tools in Ch3.

1.5 Rationale for research on early literacy in Mauritius

Mauritius finds itself ahead of many sub-Saharan countries in the sense that it has already reached universal primary education. Moreover, it has reached near-universal enrolment at preschool level (95% in 2006). However, unlike many postcolonial countries that have opted for mother tongue education and literacy, Mauritians are neither made literate, nor educated, in their L1. For social, political and historical reasons explored in Ch2, the LiEP entails the teaching of literacy (language of literacy - LoL) in English (a foreign

language - FL)⁶ as from Standard 1 (Std1), in view of its use as the only written medium of instruction (MoI) throughout the whole educational system.

This mismatch between the home language and primary school language has had an impact on the preschool sector. In fact, the LiEP applicable in primary schools has had a washback⁷ effect on the *2003 Pre-School Programme Guidelines* (2003PPG), which reads: “Since English is the **official language** throughout the education system, and English is the **medium of instruction** at a higher level of primary education, it is only logical that through songs or poetry, a child will **learn** some English **daily** in relation to the theme being worked on” (pg. 40) [*my emphasis*]. By acknowledging the importance of English in the preschool, the preschool curriculum has transformed the preschool into the language bridge between the home and the primary school. Indeed, the 2003PPG says in clear terms that it aims to “ensure the successful integration of the child during the transitory stage into primary” (2003PPG, iv). Moreover, the preschool is expected to prepare children for the language situation in primary education: the 2003PPG claims that children who have participated in high quality preschool programmes “are more likely to score higher in reading, mathematics and language achievement” (2003PPG: 4) than children who have not attended preschool.

ECD consultants have suggested that “research on the language of the pre-school, particularly on optimum language development for children in the age group 2-5, whose first language is neither French nor English” be carried out (Bennett, 2000: 45, also mentioned in Bassant & Moti, 2000: ii). In his research work, which focuses on the teaching of French in pre-primary and primary schools, Tirvassen (1997, 2001) observes the problematical approach to teaching oral English in preschools. However, to my

⁶ Kramsch (2000: 314) uses the term L2 to characterise the language acquired, in natural or instructional settings, by immigrants or professionals in the country in which the language is the national language. Foreign languages, however, traditionally refer to languages learned in schools that are removed from any natural context in use. I use the term Foreign Language (FL) for English because, despite its status as 'official' language, it is hardly used as a social language in Mauritius. There is very little exposure to English in the day-to-day life of Mauritians.

⁷ Taylor (2005: 154) defines washback as the way in which a test affects teaching materials and classroom management. This effect is perceived as either being harmful or beneficial. Although there is no testing at the beginning of Std1, it seems that the official LiEP has had a direct impact on the preschool curriculum, since English is mentioned in the document.

knowledge, there is no empirical research on the teaching of oral English at preschool level in Mauritius.⁸

1.6 Early literacy experiences: An exploratory pilot study

In the context of a paucity of research on the initiation to English in a FL context, a pilot study was designed locally. This exploratory study used Kramsch's (2000: 314) distinction between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, which focuses on the learner as an autonomous entity, and Foreign Language (FL) research where scholars turn their attention to the schooling process (the interaction between curricular variables, the teacher and the learner), as a guide for the research.

The pilot study was a preliminary tentative cross-sectional study, carried out between April and September 2004, in 6 government preschools. Access was made possible through the Regional Co-ordinator⁹ and the Teacher Educators/Supervisors (TESs), who phoned the schools and informed teachers of my visit. After spending 2 days as a "complete observer" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 305) in each preschool, I asked the preschool teachers¹⁰ to fill in a questionnaire (**Appendix A**). The findings from the pilot study, which replicated some of Tirvassen's (1997, 2001:72) findings, were:

- A teacher-centred approach;
- Teachers' limited conception of what constitutes a conversation in English;
- Children's exposure to limited syntactical structures, like "it's his...", "the NOUN is COLOUR";
- Children's mechanical repetition.

The other findings of this pilot study were:

- A teacher-centred approach with emphasis on the repetitive teaching of a limited number of English words and songs;

⁸ I must acknowledge that there are a few undergraduate dissertations, carried out at the University of Mauritius, under the supervision of Ms Ballgobin. However, the rigour of the research methodology is unknown.

⁹ The Regional Coordinator of Zone 4, the zone in which the whole of my research has been carried out.

¹⁰ These teachers (n=15) were all female, professionally qualified and experienced, who used predominantly Kreol (a French-based creole) as their everyday language of communication.

- The predominant use of the translation method as a means of exposing children to English;
- Children's parrot-like replies to a limited number of questions;¹¹
- Little evidence of children's understanding;¹²
- Mechanical copying of words (written down by teachers).

The pilot study was enlightening in major ways:

- 1) It highlighted the similarity between Tirvassen's (1997) findings and my own observations, suggesting that in 7 years (during which preschool teachers had been trained, provided with the 1991 Master Plan and the 2003PPG), pedagogical practices had remained unchanged. This apparent stagnation demanded further investigation;
- 2) It revealed that the issue of oral English was closely linked to the issue of reading and writing: teachers systematically made children copy English and French words under their drawings;
- 3) It indicated that the cross-sectional approach of the pilot was methodologically limited in that it provided descriptive data, but (a) it failed to show the potential development of teaching practices over time, (b) it failed to explain the reasons underlying the teachers' observed practices; (c) it failed to reveal the learners' potential progress in oral English and pre-reading/writing skills over time; and (d) it failed to uncover the knowledge that children brought in from their homes. The cross sectional approach also demonstrated that access through the TES posed problems in terms of perceived power relations. In all the preschools I visited, I was seen in a supervisory role. This probably had a bearing on the teachers' behaviour when I observed them;
- 4) It pointed out the lack of conceptual tools to address the questions of (a) early exposure to oral English and pre-reading/writing, and (b) early literacy development in

¹¹ They would answer, « The weather is fine » to « How is the weather today? » when the sky was cloudy and it was raining, and would reply « Today is Monday » to « What day is it today? » even when it was another day of the week.

¹² The children in one preschool were singing a song on a « Big Black Hen ».

- When the teacher asked whether they knew what a hen was;
- There was a number of guesses until a student said cockerel;
- Then the teacher said that a hen was a 'poule';
- The teacher then asked whether they knew what 'black' meant;
- A child answered 'brown', so the teacher had to give the correct meaning of 'black', through its French translation.

a foreign language context (in terms of teachers' practices, children's learning experiences and learning outcomes).

The pilot study helped determine my choice of an ethnographic approach to the case study for the main 2005 study. This is described in Ch4.

1.7 Motivation for research

In the context where all Mauritian children learn to read and write in English (an FL), the preschool is possibly the first place where they are introduced to oral English and initiated to pre-reading and pre-writing in English. In this setting, the teacher is the significant role model for the children and the teacher has the role of controlling and facilitating exposure to oral English and literacy learning through instruction (Mooko, 2005: 39). However, the preliminary findings from the pilot study led to a deep concern for the teaching practices related to preschoolers' exposure to oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing in Mauritius.

Although it would have been simple, albeit tempting, to hold teachers responsible for their pedagogical practices, my reading on the language ecology model (Hornberger, 2003; Mühlhäusler, 1996), Cortes's interaction model (in Freeman & Freeman, 2001: 2) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social-ecological model, made me aware that child development occurs within a dynamic environment consisting of nested interactive and interdependent systems that directly and indirectly influence the development course (Foster *et al.*, 2005). Hence, teachers are part of a complex situation that contributes to shape their practices. This reading made it clear to me that unless I could understand the local context and the factors influencing local preschool teachers' practices, my attempt to improve the present situation would be futile. My main motivation has been to consider ways of optimising oral English/literacy development in the local context and that at the very foundation phase of the education system (Garcia & Beltran, 2003).

1.8 Main and sub research questions

My main research questions (RQs) are as follows:

In the context where English, as a foreign language, is the main language of literacy and the main written medium of instruction throughout the Mauritian education system:

RQ1: What factors account for preschoolers' early literacy experiences?

RQ2: What are the outcomes of these early literacy experiences?

RQ3: How far do these experiences prepare them to use English as main language of literacy and main written medium of instruction in Std 1?

I have formulated my sub-research questions (SRQs) under the following thematic headings:

Curricula:

Regarding oral English and pre-reading/writing,

SRQ(i): What is contained in the preschool curricula and in the teacher training manuals?

Teachers:

With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to oral English,

SRQ(ii): What are teachers' pedagogical practices?

SRQ(iii): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training and English language proficiency?

With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to pre-reading/writing,

SRQ(iv): What are teachers' pedagogical practices?

SRQ(v): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training, access to materials and their own literacy practices?

Learners:

Regarding preschoolers' home experiences,

SRQ(vi): What constitutes their language background?

SRQ(vii): To what extent are they exposed to oral English in the home?

SRQ(viii): To what kinds of literacy experiences are they exposed?

SRQ(ix): What are parents' beliefs and expectations, when it comes to doing English and pre-reading/writing in the preschool?

Learning outcomes:

SRQ(x): How much English do preschoolers learn in their final preschool year?

SRQ(xi): How familiar are they with pre-reading/writing conventions?

SRQ(xii): What would be the learning outcomes if an alternative approach to teaching oral English were used in the preschool?

1.9 Aims

The aims of the thesis are:

- 1) To consider the Std1 syllabus, with specific focus on the role and use of English as LoL and written MoI;
- 2) To analyse the pre-primary curricula and the related teacher training programmes;
- 3) To establish the language profiles of the children, by investigating mainly their exposure to oral English and literacy in their home backgrounds and its possible impact on their oral English and literacy development;
- 4) To characterise and explain the practices related to the exposure to oral English and literacy by pre-school teachers;

- 5) To survey the teachers' beliefs about and attitudes to English and literacy at pre-primary level;
- 6) To assess teachers' own English language proficiencies;
- 7) To describe teachers' own literacy practices;
- 8) To establish children's level of proficiency in oral English and literacy as they begin their final pre-primary year and when they leave pre-primary education;
- 9) To assess the desirability of the implementation of 2003PPG, using an alternative Total Physical Response approach,¹³ as part of a quasi-experimental intervention design.

1.10 Contributions to knowledge, educational practice and research

The outcomes of this research should be to:

- 1) contribute to the state of knowledge and research on early childhood education and early literacy, especially in contexts where mother tongue education is not available;
- 2) develop finer theoretical concepts, which will be used as tools, to investigate into and analyse oral and early literacy experiences of preschoolers in contexts where L1 literacy is not available;
- 3) investigate the teaching and learning experiences in Mauritian preschools so as to understand some of the complexities of early literacy development in foreign language contexts such as Mauritius;
- 4) make recommendations on how to improve the early teaching of oral English and literacy experiences for learners in contexts where children do not learn to read and write in their L1.

1.11 Outline of chapter contents

Chapter 1 briefly provides the international and local contextual background against which the research work for this thesis is planned and carried out.

¹³ TPR was originally used with adult second language learners. It worked on the premise that adult second language learning could have similar development patterns as child first language acquisition. TPR draws on the fact that children learn their first language through commands to ask students to respond physically to the language that they hear (Harmer, 2002: 90). TPR emphasises comprehension, it makes minimal use of the L1 and uses the imperative (Garcia, 1985: 1).

Chapter 2 considers various post/neo-colonial African and Asian contexts, pointing out the contentious issue of the choice of language(s) in the LiEP, its implementation and its impact on the language policy and practices in the preschool sector. This chapter then situates Mauritius (the LiEP and pre-primary education) as a case study in the wider postcolonial context.

Chapter 3 is the story of my journey in quest of a theoretical framework, which will provide the conceptual tools and methodological instruments to address the research questions.

The **fourth chapter** gives a detailed account of the research design and methodology. It describes the different phases of this research work, as well as the chosen methodological instruments used to address the various research questions. Proposed data analysis procedures are also described.

Chapter 5 analyses the main official documents that inform the Mauritian preschool classroom practices: the preschool curricula and the accredited teacher training course manuals (TTM), in order to understand the classroom practices that they encourage.

In **Chapter 6**, the focus is on the strategies teachers use to expose preschoolers to oral English. Procedures for data collection and analysis are briefly described before the data are presented and analysed.

The data collection and data analysis techniques for teachers' literacy practices are described in **Chapter 7**. The data are then presented and analysed.

Since the role of the home cannot be underestimated in children's development, **Chapter 8** describes and analyses the data collected from the parents of all the children involved in the study. The data are used to present parents' language background, their literacy ethos and their beliefs, perceptions and expectations, with respect to the teaching of oral English and literacy to their children.

The aims of **Chapter 9** are twofold. First of all, it describes the theoretical foundations underlying (1) the oral English test and (2) the literacy tests, the former of which had to be designed locally for the purposes of this thesis. Secondly, this chapter describes and discusses the test results of the two groups of children involved in this research. These test results give an indication of what the children learn over their final year at preschool, and what they could potentially learn should an alternative English language teaching approach be used.

Chapter 10 brings together all the data analysed from Chapters 5 to 9 and seeks to interpret them. This interpretive analysis suggests that teachers form part of a system and that their classroom practices are shaped by the system and the specificities of the local context.

Chapter 11 concludes the thesis, by summarising the main findings and making recommendations to the Ministry of Education. It also subjectively attempts to gauge contribution of this thesis to the advancement of educational research, theoretically and methodologically, in Mauritius, with possible ramifications for the wider African context.

CHAPTER 2

Contextual review

The impact of language-in-education policies on the pre-primary education sector: some postcolonial settings

2.1 Introduction

In the context where “the concept of basic education has been expanded to include early childhood and primary education” (cited in ADEA, 2003: 35), this chapter aims to consider (1) the language-in-education policy (LiEP) in selected ex-colonies, (2) their implementation, and (3) their impact on the curricula and practices in the preschool sector.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I review the situation in four African (Ch2.2) and two Asian (Ch2.3) countries, in order to situate Mauritius within the larger postcolonial setting. The reason for choosing both African and Asian countries is that despite being geographically African, Mauritius has a large Asian population. In the second part, I focus exclusively on Mauritius: its sociolinguistic setting, its LiEP at primary level, and the preschool sector.

2.2 LiEP in some African postcolonial settings

In this sub-section (Ch2.2), I concentrate on four African postcolonial contexts: South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland and the Seychelles. The choice of these countries has been determined by the fact that, like Mauritius, English has retained a special place in their education systems.

2.2.1 South Africa

Under the South African Schools Act of 1996, education is compulsory for all South Africans from the age of 7 to 15, or until they complete Grade9. State schools are state aided and parents contribute in the form of school fees.

2.2.1.1 The LiEP in South Africa

The LiEP in post-1994 South Africa has adopted an additive approach to multilingualism, with special emphasis on mother tongue (MT) education.¹⁴ However, despite proponents of MT education (as, for example, Heugh & October, 2005), this LiEP has faced many challenges, resulting in a part-failure of meeting the objective to promote African languages in higher domains, including education (Kamwangamalu, 2004: 132; Reagan, 2001, 2002). Various factors can explain this:

- 1) **The historical context:** The Bantu education system (Alexander 2004: 117, Heugh 1999, 2002) has left its imprint on the black South African consciousness, nourishing the belief among black South Africans that MT education is a strategy for blocking access to upward social mobility. It seems that some black Africans still perceive MT education as a means of geographically segregating ethnic/racial groups (Young,¹⁵ 2007, p.c.). This perception is exacerbated by the fact that schools in informal settlements (the former homelands) remain marked by poor quality, so that the “contours of quality differences by and large continue to reflect historical legacies and differences;” further, poorer provinces often have un- or under-qualified teachers (Chisholm, 2004: 6-7). Moreover, in some provinces, like the Limpopo province, Johnson (2007: 316) reports that there are institutions that have created two schools in one institution, with one school teaching the curriculum in English to predominantly black students and the other school teaching in Afrikaans to Afrikaans-speaking students, intensifying the perception that remnants of apartheid are still present. Soudien (2007: 183) questions the quality of young children’s learning experiences, and argues that, “the apartheid legacy continues to be determining in shaping and

¹⁴ The issue of MT education seems to be a contentious one in Africa, including South Africa, with recent proposals for the extension of MT education. Bamgbose (2004), Brock-Utne (2005: 190) and Heugh (2006) have argued that MT education should be provided in a late-exit bilingual model of education (6-8 years of education), while Prah (2005) supports the idea of extending MT throughout the school system (pre-primary to tertiary education).

¹⁵ I here acknowledge the contribution of Emeritus Professor D. Young, UCT, who suggests that the fact that many advocates of MT education are non-Blacks might weaken the position of these people in the eyes of Black Africans. A similar trend is noted in Mauritius, where many of the defenders of MT education send their own children to English/French medium private schools. Refer to Ch2.4.2. I wish to put on record that my supervisors do not necessarily share my understanding of the South African scene. My understanding and interpretation have been informed by my reading of journal articles, while they have first hand knowledge of the South African situation. This also applies to my reading of the articles for other countries reviewed in this chapter. I acknowledge that I have little personal contact with/knowledge of these contexts. As far as possible I chose sources from the available international and refereed literature. These articles might themselves contain a bias in the way the research is carried out and presented.

accounting for the character of current social behaviour in the country, including performance in schools.” He names this feeling of insecurity among blacks the “‘A’ factor”;

- 2) **The educational/economic set-up:** The pressure of the matric examination, the language policies of colleges, technikons and universities (Murray, 2002: 438) and the pervasive nature of English on the job market (Howie, 2004; Webb, 1999) all play a significant role in strengthening the role of English to the detriment of African languages, which have no economic cachet locally or internationally (Kamwangamalu, 2004: 137). Jansen (2001: 286) criticises education policies in South Africa for over-investing in political symbolism to mark a break with apartheid, at the expense of practical considerations;
- 3) **Policy implementation:** Arguably as a consequence of the government’s failure to take informed decisions about the MoI (Webb, 2004), there has been a lack of organisation of MT education (Heugh, 1999: 308; Wright, 2004: 188) in the form of an inadequate preparation of African languages for their use as MoI (corpus and status planning - Makalela, 2005: 155; Webb, 2004: 159, 163), an inadequate supply of teaching materials (Stroud, 2001) and a lack of relevant teacher training (Heugh 1999: 308). There have also been some problems in ensuring that children reach the level of English proficiency required for the transition to English as MoI.¹⁶ It seems that the English language proficiency of South Africans is below required levels (Webb 2002; Webb, 2004: 148, citing MacDonald 1990, Le Roux & Schollar, 1996) at the moment when English becomes the MoI.¹⁷ According to Schelebusch (2000), English as a Second Language (ESL) is a challenge for many learners, specially in previously disadvantaged black schools where learners lack English proficiency before entering the Senior Phase;
- 4) **The inadequacy of the concept ‘additive bilingualism’:** The concept of additive bilingualism, which was proposed by Lambert (1975) and popularised by Cummins

¹⁶ Holmarsdottir’s (2003) study on the transition from the use of the MT to the use of English as MoI concludes that the six factors that affect the pupils’ adjustment to English are: limited input of English, limited exposure to English, limited/no parental support, low levels of MT development, lack of sufficient knowledge of English, lack of materials.

¹⁷ Ghana provides an example of a similar kind of situation. Research indicates that under the current Ghanaian language policy, children do not reach the cognitive threshold necessary for the successful transfer to English in the fourth year of primary education (Kraft, 1994: 2, cited in Lipson & Wixson, 2004: 3).

(1981), refers to a situation where the « learner's native language and native cultural identity are maintained while the target language and target cultural identity are acquired in addition » (Yihong *et al.*, 2005: 39). In South Africa, Cummins (1981) is widely cited in support of mother tongue education (Banda, 2000: 61). One, however, wonders at the relevance of this concept to the South African context because (1) it originated in western societies and fails to capture the complexity of African multilingual settings (Makoni, 1994: 22), (2) it originally referred to children who came from majority language groups whose L1 was strongly reinforced in society (English-speakers in French immersion programmes) or minority groups whose L1 was reinforced by school bilingual programmes (Cummins, 1998) - which is not the case of South Africa, (3) it does not take into account attitudes/expectations of pupils, parents and teachers (Pakir, 1993), (4) it refers to integratively motivated, rather than instrumentally motivated learners of English (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) - and South African learners tend to be instrumentally motivated (Bosch & de Klerk, 1996), and (5) it might indicate the selective nature of education systems - 'additive bilingualism' and 'élite bilingualism' (Fishman *et al.*, 1966) have sometimes been used as synonyms (McCarthy, 1995, cited in King & Fogle, 2006: 695) and any elitist consideration is deeply problematical for post-Apartheid South Africa;

- 5) **Parents' perception of the status and power of English:** A number of researchers (Banda, 2003; Barkhuizen, 2001; De Klerk, 1996, 2000, 2002; Kamwangamalu, 2004: 137; Makalela, 2005: 148; Probyn, 2005; Probyn *et al.*, 2002; Reagan, 2001; Zulu, 2003) document the passion with which educators and parents declare their preference for English-mainly education, believing English to be a better and superior language, a language that ensures success (Chatry-Komarek, 2003; Ncoko *et al.*, 2000). This belief is fuelled by the fact that parents from the emerging middle class send their children to formerly all-white schools, where English tends to be the MoI (Sailors *et al.*, 2007: 369). Although it is true that the LiEP allows parents to choose the language of learning and teaching on behalf of their children, Lewis (2001: 9) says that some parents choose English for their children, irrespective of their children's competency in English. Even DET schools (Department of Education and Training – under apartheid, they were among the most disadvantaged schools) favour English as

MoI (Webb 1999: 355) and all Western Cape schools confirm a drive for English and a shift to English-medium education at the expense of African languages (Pluddemann *et al.*, 2004; Young *et al.*, 1995). Probyn (2005: 159) argues that the proviso that any policy should be subject to “practicability” allows schools to carry on teaching through the medium of English and to offer other languages as subjects. This proviso is referred to when introducing other languages (as subjects or MoI) involves additional teaching staff. Conversely, learners have negative attitudes to African languages (Stroud, 2001).

Coupled with the international status of English, such a complex situation described above has had repercussions on the home and the school. Alexander (2002: 119) and Wolff (2006: 29) use the terms “static maintenance syndrome” and “linguistic schizophrenia” to describe the African situation: Africans are happy to maintain their L1 in the family and community, considering that African languages are adequately learnt at home (Young *et al.*, 1995: 63), but they do not believe that these same languages have the capacity to become languages of power. Holmarsdottir (2003) quotes Desai to say that a lot of lip service is being paid to multilingualism, but the hegemony of English remains intact, a hegemony that is not questioned by the African leadership (Alexander & Heugh, 1999: 6-7). Indeed, “tides seem to be turning increasingly in favour of English” (Daily News, 8 May 2001, cited in Kamwangamalu, 2004: 132).

2.2.1.2 Pre-primary education in South Africa

In South Africa, pre-primary education refers to pre-Grade1 education, directed at learners that are 0 - 6 years (UNESO, 2006). Having identified ECD as an appropriate vehicle through which educational transformation can be achieved, South Africa is taking its first steps in planning pre-primary education:

- In 1994, the South African government recognised, for the first time, that young children are the starting point of human resource development (refer to Early Learning Resource Unit (1997) document for a brief history of ECD in South Africa);

- In 2001, less than one sixth of the 6.4m children, aged 0 - 7 years, were in some form of Early Childhood Care, with just about half of the 5 - 6 year cohort being accommodated;
- Two-thirds of operating preschools are presently registered, with over 60% preschools catering for 5 - 6 year olds (UNESCO, 2006);
- According to UNESCO (2006), 12% of the 54 503 teachers were trained in 2002 - 2003, with the majority of educators having been trained by NGOs, whose training courses are not accredited;
- According to UNESCO (2006), some of the projects to expand and improve Early Childhood Care and Education in South Africa include the incorporation of GradeR (Grade Reception Class) in formal education, the increase of budgets to expand access to GradeR, the introduction of a GradeR teacher-training programme;
- The 2002 Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) has provided a framework for learners in GradeR. For the Department of Education (DoE), the introduction of GradeR is intended to improve the school readiness of children (Chisholm, 2004: 18). The DoE is currently using the policy framework outlined in the ECD White Paper of 2001 to inform the implementation of the ECD Programme and is phasing in GradeR into the system, so that by 2010 all learners will be enrolled in an accredited Reception Year Programme (UNESCO, 2006);
- The Department of Education is currently working on curriculum guidelines for 0 - 4 year olds (UNESCO, 2006).

The current GradeR curriculum clearly gives a choice place to the MT, with options of 'English - Home language', 'English - First additional language', and 'English - Second additional language' for learners. The curriculum for each of these streams of English language teaching is different, with different starting points for the learners and with different learning outcomes.

The limited research on the language issue in South African preschools indicates the importance given to English in the sector. Robb (1995) claims that English is utilised in preschools, despite the fact that the children are not native speakers of English. Similarly, the national audit of ECD provision in South Africa (Williams & Samuels, 2001: 165) reports the pre-eminence of English as MoI in 83% of identifiable sites, while it is the home language (HL) of only 12% of the learners enrolled in those sites. Makalela (2005: 148) notes that a number of black educated parents send their children to private English-medium schools as early as kindergarten, while Prinsloo & Stein (2004) say that preschool children are commonly encouraged to speak English and are spoken to in English by their parents because their parents identify 'good English' as vital for their children's success at school and thereafter.

As for the teaching/learning of early literacy skills in South African preschools, the Report on the National ECD Pilot Project (2001) states that practitioners do not understand how to teach early literacy skills, arguing that the then Curriculum2005 (C2005) and Draft ECD norms and standards did not help them to understand skills that learners are expected to have before beginning Grad1, and that there is little evidence of pre-reading and activities beyond sound recognition activities (p. 140). Consequently, at the end of the first three years of schooling, South African learners still have rudimentary grasp of the principles of reading and writing (Taylor *et al.*, 2003: 41). Pretorius & Naude (2002) argue that South African pupils compare unfavourably with other countries on literacy and numeracy, suggesting that they are ill-prepared for formal education. Some of the skills which South African children lack are literacy skills and knowledge of the alphabet, related to the inadequate exposure to reading and writing.

2.2.2 Botswana

Education is neither compulsory nor free in Botswana. In 2006, after 20 years of free education, Botswana reintroduced school fees.

2.2.2.1 The LiEP in Botswana

Botswana is an example of an African country, which has experienced some difficulties to turn to MT education (refer to Molosiwa, 2005; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000, 2004; and Nyati-Ramahobo & Orr, 1993, for a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the sociolinguistic situation in Botswana). Although the first National Commission on Education (NCE) (1977) recommended that MT education be offered in the first four years of schooling, the government rejected the idea. The second NCE (1993) thus recommended the reduction of the number of years for MT education: Setswana was proposed as MoI in the first year only, for two main reasons: early concept formation and cultural identity/unity (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1991, cited in Bagwasi, 2003). The second NCE also proposed the use of English as MoI as from Grade 2.

This shift away from the MT towards an earlier use of English as LoL and MoI can be explained by teachers' and parents' resistance to change. While teacher-trainers and teachers, especially those from the older generation, support English as main MoI (Arthur, 1997), parents prefer their children to speak English, especially in the school and the playground, despite the fact that their children show a preference for Setswana (Arua & Magocha, 2000, 2002). This can be explained by the fact that the job market requires language competence in English rather than in Setswana (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1991, 2000: 267), discouraging people from learning Setswana. It also seems that the government's policy of linguistic assimilation - encouraging minority language speakers to adopt Setswana - has contributed to giving a stronger place to English in the LiEP (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000).

In the light of this situation, Bagwasi (2003) has argued in favour of striking a balance between local languages and English, and using them to complement each other. However, Bagwasi (2003) fails to be more precise about how this can be achieved.

2.2.2.2 Pre-primary education in Botswana

In Botswana, preschool education is not compulsory and it is run only by NGOs (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004: 42). Aware of the value of pre-primary education (Taiwo & Tyolob, 2002: 170), the Government of Botswana has been working on a policy document (focused on structural qualities and standards) and teacher training (not yet accredited) since 1994 (Early Childhood Care & Education Policy, 2001). As far as LiEP is concerned, the second NCE (1993) proposed that preschool children be taught in the language dominant in the area where the school is located, with English and Setswana being introduced gradually. Although this recommendation was rejected on the basis that it was not aligned on the official LiEP, there is evidence that the government may consider reversing its decision (Motlaso, 2001: 4; cited in Arua & Magocha, 2002: 460).

Research in Botswana (The Kuru Development Trust, 1995; Otaala *et al.*, 1982, 1989; Taiwo & Tyolob, 2002) has indicated that day-care programmes tend to have a positive effect, especially with respect to the transition to and preparation for primary schooling. However, Monau (1992, cited in Sprey *et al.*, 1997: 286) describes the problematic nature of the teaching methods used in Botswana preschools: teachers limit themselves to a formal teaching of English to preschoolers, and children are seated in rows, are lectured at and are made to recite word lists. Such practices have also been described by Brock-Utne (2002: 20, cited in Dull, 2004), who argues that African teachers in general tend use rote methods because children must learn and take exams in second languages.

According to the Botswana National Integrated Early Childhood Baseline Study (2006), the demand for preschools has grown. However, with the poor salaries, the lack of training and the diversity of educational inputs, the quality of preschool education can be questioned. It appears that literacy and cognitive development are at-risk, given the lack of stimulation in the homes.

2.2.3 Seychelles

Since the early 1980s, there has been a system of free education in the Seychelles. School is presently compulsory till the age of 16.

2.2.3.1 The LiEP in Seychelles

The Seychelles (an atoll in the Indian Ocean), like Mauritius, is a postcolonial state, with Seychelles Creole as the MT and local *lingua franca*. Unlike Mauritius, Seychelles has been radical in its LiEP, possibly because of the nature of the dictatorial government, which installed itself in 1977, leading to changes at the level of language policy, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Development of education in Seychelles

1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seychellois Creole became the official language, as stipulated in Article 4 of the New Constitution (Bollée, 1993: 87; Salabert, 2003).
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creolisation of the education system: Creole was imposed as the main Mol in the first four years of primary education with a slow shift to English and French in the later years of primary education. Initially, the introduction of Creole met with popular dissatisfaction (Bollée, 1993: 89), because it was perceived as a political move, carried out without proper planning (lack of textbooks in Creole; lack of teacher training - Tirvassen 2000: 2).
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The democratisation of the island: less time was accorded to Creole and more to English in the curriculum
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Language Policy Review Committee was commissioned to (1) explain the problem of underachievement in all subjects, including languages, and (2) address the issue of the delays in learning during the transition phase from Creole to English as Mol. The committee recommended that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The LiEP should ensure continuity in learning; ○ Ways be found to enhance pupils' interest/competence in English; ○ An earlier transition to English-medium instruction in the major academic subjects be considered. The Report states that "ninety percent of teachers and sixty-five percent of curriculum developers and teacher trainers believe that children would make more rapid progress in reading if they learned to read in English from the beginning" (p. 8) and they also feel that time is lost in the transition to English-medium instruction in P5 (Primary5) where teachers spend much time re-teaching the contents previously taught in Creole (p. 11); ○ A change in LiEP is not a solution to all problems. Factors other than language should be considered for the upgrading of the education system, like the quality of teachers, the curriculum, teaching methods, the question of automatic promotion.

The recent history of Seychelles has thus seen a change in LiEP, with Creole being the MoI in preschool and the first 2 years of primary schooling, and with a shift to English as MoI as from the third year of primary schooling.

2.2.3.2 Pre-primary education in Seychelles

Education, from preschool level upwards, in the Seychelles is free. Although pre-primary education is optional, over 99% of children aged 4 to 6 attend preschools. These preschools are mostly government kindergartens attached to primary schools (SACMEQ, 2005: 2-3). The 1994 Language Policy Review Committee Report recommended that (1) measures be taken to expose preschool children to English, and (2) the government study the feasibility of making the last year of preschool compulsory. The 1998 MoE document, *La Politique des Langues dans le Curriculum National* (1998), explicitly established the place of English in the preschool curriculum. In Year 1, English is supposed to be used for simple language activities like greetings and social interactions; in Year 2, English is to be taught more formally and orally through songs, nursery rhymes and story telling throughout the year; literacy in English is meant to be introduced in the third term of the same year. Although there are official documents/reports on preschool education in the Seychelles, no empirical studies have been found on early language and literacy development.

2.2.4 Swaziland

State education is not free in Swaziland: parents have to pay nominal fees. Although the government aims to provide 10 years universal basic education to all children, education is presently not compulsory.

2.2.4.1 LiEP in Swaziland

The LiEP in Swaziland favours the use of iSwati as MoI in the lower grades of primary school, with a gradual transition to English after Grade 4 (Mbatha, 2002; Rollnick, 1992). The entry tests for primary schools are carried out in English. This has an impact on preschool education, with English being taught and used as MoI, despite the fact that this practice is not in line with Government policy.

2.2.4.2 Pre-primary education in Swaziland

The Swazi National Preschool Curriculum Plan was published in 1988, with the aim to achieve higher standards and quality in preschool education. Despite the expansion of the preschool sector since then, the aim to develop an “active, questioning, creative child, ready to seize every educational opportunity” has not been translated into preschool practices. According to Tyobeka (1986, 1989), preschool education in Swaziland limits itself mainly to the teaching of reading and writing. Sprey *et al.*'s (1997) study of 25 pre-schools (observed during a whole day) indicated that the entrance exams in Std1 put pressure on preschool teaching practices. Hence, a formal, discrete-skills teaching approach is favoured with instruction stressing isolated skills and knowledge through rote and drill and the absence of the MT as MoI. Sprey *et al.*'s (1997) study also suggests that preschools are trying to promote English. One of their recommendations is that the preschool sector should consult with the primary school sector, so that developmentally appropriate teaching practices are carried out at preschool level and appropriate entry tests be designed for Std1.

2.2.5 Zambia

Although education is free up to Year 7 in Zambia, it is not compulsory.

2.2.5.1 LiEP in Zambia

Because of the identified problems of high rate of failure and poor reading skills and poor reading culture by Williams (1998), who considers the biliteracy issue in some detail, Zambia changed LiEP in 1996 (Muyeeba, 2004). Since then, initial reading skills have been introduced in the L1 through the *Zambia Primary Reading Programme* (Strategic Plan, 2003-2007, Ministry of Education, Republic of Zambia; Sampa, 2003). However, Zambian officials were adamant that there should not be a mismatch between the mother tongue course and the English course, so English retains a choice place in this new language configuration, with oral English being introduced in Grade1. This change in LiEP has led to massive teacher training, the production of training manuals, the provision of well resourced environments, financial support (10.2 million pounds sterling), time allocation to teach reading and writing, the sensitisation of stakeholders,

and team work between teachers and officials. Reading levels, according to Sampa (2003: 8) have risen from 30% to 68% since the implementation of the reading programme. Although it is possible that the shift to MT literacy may have contributed to more successful reading levels among Zambian children, it also seems likely that this progress has been due to the overall increase in educational quality, which accompanied the reading programme.

2.2.5.2 Pre-primary education in Zambia

With the Zambian Government admitting that “The lack of preparation through preschool is a contributory factor to under-achievement especially by rural children and the poor in basic schools” (Strategic Plan, 2003-2007, Ministry of Education, Republic of Zambia), it has signified its intention (1) to set up pre-schooling facilities in existing primary schools, and (2) to further extend teacher training in this sub-sector.

2.3 LiEP in some Asian postcolonial settings

In this sub-section (Ch2.3), I look at two Asian settings: Singapore and Hong Kong. Like the postcolonial settings reviewed in Ch2.2, these two countries have also accommodated English in their education system.

2.3.1 Singapore

In Singapore, education is free. Since 1 January 2003, education became compulsory for children aged 6 to 15.

2.3.1.1 LiEP in Singapore

Acknowledging its linguistic diversity, Singapore has given official status to four languages in a spirit of “pragmatic multilingualism” (Kuo & Jernudd, 1993: 4, cited in Cheah, 1997). Such a top-down political decision, with the policies being made by the political leaders (Cheah, 1997; Foley, 2006), led to careful engineering, where the roles and functions of English were slowly and clearly increased to culminate in making English the sole MoI throughout the system in 1987 (Tsui *et al.*, 1999: 207-208). This political engineering of languages also led to an increase in the use of English as a home

language (from 10.2% in 1980 to 21.4% in 1990), although it is clear that English is not a universal home language.

Most Singaporeans develop literacy in English first because it is the first school language and is thus considered to be the L1 of Singaporeans. The MoE document, *A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore*, states that, “Children will learn two languages, English as the first language and Chinese, Malay or Tamil as a mother tongue language.” Given that English functions as MoI in the school curriculum, the strategies for teaching English are increasingly being borrowed from native-speaking states (Cheah, 1997). Paradoxically, the other languages, which many Singaporeans actually use at home, are considered and taught as L2 in schools (Cheah & Lim, 1996, cited in Li & Rao, 2005). In fact, the mother tongues have become “cultural anchors” that link individuals to more traditional values (Wee, 2002). According to Rubdy (2005: 59), an increase in education in the L1 would be seen as disempowering the lower social classes and as threatening to the minorities.

2.3.1.2 Pre-primary education in Singapore

Children aged 4 to 6 attend preschools. According to Kim Choo (2004), 99% of children in Grade1 have had at least one year of preschool education. An attempt was made to include one year of preschool education into the primary school system, but the idea was abandoned because of the additional cost. Hence, although the MoE registers the preschools, they remain the responsibility of the private sector and “operate in a highly competitive environment” (Li & Rao, 2005: 239). As far as teacher training is concerned, three levels of mandatory training are available to preschool teachers: the Certificate in Preschool Teaching, the Diploma in Preschool Education (Teaching), and the Diploma in Preschool Education (Leadership)).

The Singaporean government has issued guidelines on the preschool curriculum, *A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore*. This curriculum points out that the role of kindergarten is a preparation for primary school as well as a preparation for the journey of life-long learning. The curriculum includes ‘language and literacy’ as one

of the six critical areas to be explored and specifies that, “Children will also need to be immersed in language-rich environments, and engaged in activities which foster the use of English in everyday, authentic situations in order to help them acquire the necessary communication skills to express their needs, thoughts and feelings in English.” Li & Rao (2005: 239) point out that while a preschool English curriculum exists in Singapore, none exists for the teaching of Chinese languages (the actual L1 of most children). This indicates the importance given to English as from preschool education level. According to Gupta (1994: 161, cited in Tan, 2005), 90% of Singaporean parents prefer their children to spend more time on English in the preschool because they perceive preschool education as a preparation for primary school (Seng, 1994, cited in O’Gorman *et al.*, 2004). However, Li & Rao (2005: 239) argue that there is discrepancy between parents’ and primary schools’ expectations and the preschool programme: while parents and primary schools desire greater academic focus in the preschool, preschool teachers believe that their preschools already emphasise pre-academic skills. Moreover, as well as wanting the children to become literate in English, Singaporean parents and preschool teachers also want them to be made literate in Chinese in preschools (Cheah & Lim, 1996, cited in Li & Rao, 2005: 239) because of the growing political and economic importance of China.

2.3.2 Hong Kong

Primary and junior secondary education is free and compulsory in Hong Kong.

2.3.2.1 LiEP in Hong Kong

With Hong Kong going back to China in 1997, after having been under British ‘rule’ for decades, there has been a general shift from EMI (English as MoI) schools to CMI (Chinese as MoI) schools. According to Lao & Krashen (1999: 2) and Law (1999: 8), this shift has proved to be a beneficial model of education. However, it is arguable that the success of CMI schools partly lies in Hong Kong people generally agreeing on the benefits of MT education (Kwok, 1998; Hong Kong Education Commission, 1999; cited in Lai & Byram, 2003: 321), and partly lies in the corresponding effort to upgrade the quality of English language teaching. For instance, Hong Kong has made special efforts

with respect to teaching English in CMI schools. They have also offered enhanced quality English language teaching that would appear to be an advantage for Hong Kong children: extra resources have been put in the teaching of English - 85.6% of CMI schools have provided extra-curricular activities to provide more chances for the learning of English, 78.2% have looked at the curriculum and tried to reduce teacher-student ratio, 78.9% have enriched their libraries (Tsui *et al.*, 1999: 211).

However, given the choice between CMI and EMI, locals tend to prefer the latter because EMI schools are perceived as a “gifted entitlement” (Wells & Serna, 1997), associated with a certain class of people (those who can afford private EMI schools, or who can send their children to international schools, or who can pay for private tuition after school, or who can send their children abroad for immersion programmes). Locals find it difficult to remove the inferiority label of CMI from their hearts and minds. Moreover, since graduating students are now tested, rated and given credits in English, this benchmarking penalises those who speak Creole-English, and gives an advantage to those who come from English-rich families (Lai & Byram, 2003: 323). Hence, I would argue that institutionalising two types of schools for two types of people (linguistically and socially differentiated) within the same country remains extremely problematic in Hong Kong. Hong Kong parents are frustrated by the distinction as they view it as a form of institutional inequality (Lai & Byram, 2003: 330).

2.3.2.2 Pre-primary education in Hong Kong

Although pre-primary education is not compulsory, attending preschool is part of the local culture (Opper, 1992) - up to 95% of the children, aged 3 to 5, receive ECE (according to the Education Commission, 1999, cited in Li, 2004: 332). Preschools are separate from primary schools (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2000), they are mostly privately run (fees for half a day range between HK\$ 600 and HK\$ 3 750 a month) and this probably affects the quality of preschool education (Rao, 2002).

In Hong Kong, there have been two preschool curricula, *The Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (1996) and the *New Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (2006). The new

curriculum, implemented in 2007, reserves a special place for English as a second language. It states that teachers must speak with an “accurate pronunciation” and “use language correctly” so as to develop the children’s interest in learning English (p. 30). It also discourages the practice of rote learning and dictation.

In terms of multilingualism, Hong Kong preschoolers are taught three languages: Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Preschool children are routinely taught to speak Cantonese (their L1). Furthermore, Mandarin and English are introduced in the preschool (McBride-Chang & Ho, 2000), because of the importance of both international and Chinese relations. English is taught for approximately half an hour daily, through the singing of songs, the reading of stories and learning to read and write. Formal reading instruction begins in the first year of pre-primary education: names of English letters and a few Chinese characters are taught (McBride-Chang & Treiman, 2003), and English and Chinese word recognition is taught using the ‘look and say’ method (McBride-Chang *et al.*, 2004: 97).¹⁸ Wong (2003: 94) argues that the demand of Primary 1 has imposed a top-down effect on the preschool sector.

The LiEP in Hong Kong preschools confirms Hong Kong’s aim to be a trilingual and biliterate society (Li & Rao, 2000). However, according to Carless & Wong (2000), teachers face two main difficulties when teaching English at this level: their own language proficiency and their lack of awareness of appropriate language teaching methodology, leading them to use traditional, teacher-centred, whole class methods.

¹⁸ Influenced by Confucian values, Chinese parents tend to be concerned about their children’s academic success (Chen *et al.*, 1997). Perceiving education to be the route to success and financial gain (Rao *et al.*, 2003: 334), they emphasise academic achievement, effort and perseverance.

2.4 A case-study of Mauritius

The second part of this contextual review focuses specifically on Mauritius as a case study.

2.4.1 Sociolinguistic context

LiEPs cannot be conceived, developed or understood in isolation from the macro context in which they operate (Nieuwenhuis *et al.*, 1991, cited in Nieuwenhuis, 1997; Spolsky, 2004). A number of researchers (Alladin, 1993; Atchia-Emmerich, 2005; Baggioni & de Robillard, 1990; Baker, 1972; Bunwaree, 1994, 2001; Carpooran, 2003; Hookoomsing, 1987; Mahadeo, 1999, 2004; Padaruth & Virahsawmy, 1982; Rajah-Carrim, 2003, 2005; Robillard, 1991; Stein, 1982; Tirvassen, 1989, 1991, 2007; Toussaint, 1969; Virahsawmy, 1967, 1984) have discussed the socio-historical factors that have influenced the linguistic composition of the island and that help to explain the complexity and sensitivity of the language issue in education in multilingual Mauritius. I here only briefly describe the historical and sociolinguistic setting.

The historical setting is summed in Table 2.

Table 2: A brief glimpse at the historical background of Mauritius

Dates	Political status	Main events	Languages
1721 – 1810	French colony	French colonizers Slaves	→ French → Death of African languages → Birth of French-based Creole
1810: 1968	British colony	British colonizers Indentured labourers	→ English → Oriental languages
1968	Independence		
1992	Republic		

The Mauritian sociolinguistic situation is characterised by the cohabitation of European, Asian and Creole languages (refer to **Appendix B, Table (1)** for a compilation of the census data over the past four decades - Stein (1986), however, draws our attention on the

limitations of the Mauritian census data). Bissoonauth & Offord (2001: 381) use the term “linguistic paradox” to describe the local context.

French, which is historically associated with the French oligarchy (Boudet, 2004), still dominates the prestigious registers (written press, cinema, the Catholic Church, the private sector). It is the home language (HL) of few, but is perceived as the language of culture, the language that gives access to middle-class respectability, the language of social mobility/exclusion. Atchia-Emmerich (2005: 90) says that French is the most desired language because of its social prestige, but the most hated language because it is difficult to master.

The other European language present on the island is **English**. By virtue of being used in the main institutions (the National Assembly, the courts of justice and educational authorities), English has a quasi-official status although it has never been officially designated as the official language in the constitution (Stein, 1997). English is hardly used as HL and it is rarely used socially. Apart from two English newspapers, *Mauritius Times* and *News on Sunday*, newspapers in English only have had a short life span (Atchia-Emmerich, 2005: 41). The French-dominated written press, however, does include articles in English, as for example the English supplement *Outlook* in the Tuesday edition of *L'Express* and articles in *Le Matinal* (Day-Hookoomsing, 2006: 93). Despite its limited social use, the survival of English is ensured because, compared to French and Oriental languages, it has been and still is perceived as a neutral language (Moorghen & Domingue, 1982: 58): English “has the advantage and disadvantage in Mauritius of being the language of everyone and no-one” (Michael Bootle, Ex-Director of the British Council, in Atchia-Emmerich, 2005: 39). Being the written language (not the spoken language) of the business world (Day-Hookoomsing, 2006: 54), English is perceived as the passport to social, educational and professional mobility. Unlike other countries such as Singapore, where a local variety of English has developed over the years (see Besemeres & Wierzbicka, 2003; Gupta, 1998, 1999, for distinctive features of Singlish), in Mauritius, the literature on English in Mauritius does not suggest the emergence and development of a local variety of English. Given the limited use of

English socially, I do not think it is likely that a strong local variety of English will develop locally in the near future. However, from my general observations, it appears that most Mauritians speak English with an accent of their own (some might describe it as a French accent), but it seems that Mauritians tend to look up to RP (Received Pronunciation) because the main exams are run by Cambridge. The issue of a local variety of English needs to be researched though.

Even through the **Oriental Languages (OL)**, refer to Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, Marathi, Cantonese, Hakka and Mandarin) are steadily declining in their use (Stein, 1982; Sharma & Rao, 1989, cited in Bissoonauth & Offord, 2001), they remain strong symbols of ethnic and religious identity. An incident as simple as the inversion of the original order of inscriptions (English, Tamil, Hindi) on bank notes in 1998 led to mass demonstrations, the sacking of the Director and the Deputy Director of the Bank of Mauritius, the removal of the bank notes from circulation and the printing of fresh ones with the language inscriptions in the earlier order. This cost Mauritius some \$2 million (Hookoomsing, 2001, 2003: 18; Meyerhoff, 2006: 115). A major step in the recognition of the OL was the government's decision in 1952 to set up Hindi and Urdu classes in primary schools where there was sufficient demand (Moorghen & Domingue, 1982). The inclusion of OL, as an optional subject in the primary school curriculum, has been seen as a means of preserving and appreciating cultural roots (The 1991 Master Plan: 35).

Kreol¹⁹ is the local *lingua franca*, the language that is increasingly claimed as the 'language of forefathers' and 'home language' by most Mauritians in the population census, and this to the detriment of the OL (Rajah-Carrim, 2004). Kreol co-exists in a diglossic situation with its lexifier language, French: most of the vocabulary from Kreol is French-based. Kreol is increasingly used for sermons (but not prayers) in churches and mosques (Atchia-Emmerich, 2005:44). The extensive use of Kreol as an oral language seems to ensure its survival (Mufwene, 2004): Kreol is not an endangered language in Mauritius as Mauritians do not have a conflict of identity, nor do they have a sense that

¹⁹ I use the spelling 'Kreol' for the Creole used in Mauritius, so as to differentiate it from other creoles. This particular spelling gives Mauritian Creole its identity (Carpooran, 15 June 2007, p.c.).

they are losing their identity (Bissoonauth & Offord, 2001: 398). However, Kreol has not emerged as an official or national language in the Constitution, probably because there was never a “national liberation struggle” (Bunwaree 1994: 47) for independence, and because Kreol is still associated with an ethnic minority (descendants of slaves), thus having a relatively low sociolinguistic status. One example of the low status of Kreol is the reading of the news bulletin in Kreol in 1982, which that led to such controversy that it had to be reconsidered. Rajah-Carrim (2007: 52) says that there are two reasons for which Kreol is negatively viewed: a linguistic reason (Kreol is viewed as a broken non-standard language) and an ethnic reason (Kreol is associated with Afro-Mauritians locally). Added to this may be the fact that Kreol has not been standardised yet. In September 2004, a committee proposed an official standard graph of Kreol (*Graffi-Larmoni*) after various standardised graphs of Kreol were proposed over the years. There is a yet limited, but emerging written literature in Kreol, published mainly by *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer*, a Leftist group, which is also engaged in providing adult literacy programmes in Kreol. This work has been internationally recognised through the UNESCO-IRA literacy prize a few years ago. However, the literature in Kreol, as well as the readership for Kreol literature, is fairly restricted because Mauritians have not been taught to read and write in Kreol at school.

The description indicates that languages are charged with cultural and political meaning (Miles, 2000) in the local context, with Kreol being the L1, French the L2 and English an FL.

2.4.2 Language-in-education policy in Mauritius

In Mauritius, education is free and compulsory till the age of 16.

2.4.2.1 A survey of documents and reports

The policy document that shapes the language of learning and teaching in schools today has its roots in colonial times. The present LiEP is the 1957 Ordinance, which only reiterates in substance the 1944 Ordinance, the 1916 Education Code, and the 1913 Memorandum on Education, reads:

In the lower classes of Government and aided primary schools up to and including Standard III, any one language may be employed as the **medium of instruction**, being a language which in the opinion of the Minister is most suitable for the pupils.

In Standards IV, V and VI of the Government and aided primary schools the medium of instruction shall be English, and conversation between teacher and pupils shall be carried on in English; provided that lessons in any other language taught in the school shall be carried on through the **medium of that language**. [*my emphasis*]

A number of local researchers (Carpooran, 2003; Kalla, 1982, 1987; Mahadeo, 2004; Prithipaul, 1976; Ramdoyal, 1977; Tirvassen, 1989, 1991) have shown that the LiEP has resulted from a long, slow and tedious political compromise between the French and the English, starting with Ordinance 89 of 1877. This Ordinance stipulates that exams have to be carried out in **one** language only, leading Protestant schools to opt for English and Catholic schools to opt for French. This war between languages, to use Calvet's (1987) term, indicates that power struggles between languages have been a characteristic feature of our educational history.

The term 'medium of instruction' (MoI) used in the policy document has been the source of confusion in the local context. Although a number of educational reports have dealt with the issue of Kreol as MoI, they have not been precise about their understanding of the status and use of Kreol in the education system:

- 1) The 1941 Ward Report strongly argued for the use of Kreol in lower primary education, with a switch to French afterwards, but this was rejected because Mauritius was a British colony then;
- 2) The 1978 Glover Commission pronounced itself against the teaching of Kreol, mentioning that Kreol should be used as a **support language** in education only if and when all other European languages had failed as media of instruction;
- 3) The 1979 Frank Richard Commission mentioned the use of the home language in its oral form, but did not talk about literacy in Kreol (pg. 52). Hence, this commission appears to support Kreol as a **support oral language**;
- 4) The 1983 Glover Report records the view of one member of the committee who proposed that (1) the language of the environment be the language of reading and

writing at age 6, and (2) oral English be introduced in preschools and literacy in English at the age of 7. However, the other members suggested that research be carried out before any change is instituted (pg. 65);

- 5) Kreol was officially granted the status of support language in 1982, when the government, wanting to project itself as a Left Wing Government, officially published a circular permitting the use of Kreol and Bhojpuri as support oral languages throughout primary education. However, according to Tirvassen (2000), this semi-official policy only made legal and allowable the existing linguistic practices of primary school teachers;
- 6) The 1990 Ramdoyal Report pointed out that the language issue is a sensitive area for the Government of Mauritius. This Report also says, “Mauritians in general, whatever be their private opinion, publicly subscribe to the language policy adopted. By and large there is consensus in the public and tacit understanding among the major political parties to leave undisturbed the present language policies”;
- 7) The 1998 Action Plan and 2001 Report on the rat race at the end of primary education, the two most recent reforms proposed in the last decade of the 20th century, have almost ignored that aspect of the language issue;
- 8) The *Towards a Quality Curriculum* (November 2006) document mentions languages, saying “It is a fact that teachers use the language of the environment in the classroom together with English and French throughout the primary cursus and even at secondary level. It should, however, be borne in mind that for the great majority of Mauritian children, the school is the only place where the latter have an opportunity to use and be exposed to English...Teachers should therefore be made aware of the principles underpinning language acquisition, so that they are enabled to make a judicious use of the **languages of the environment as a facilitator and support language** for improving children’s learning and overall understanding” (pg 9-10) [*my emphasis*].

From a historical perspective, it appears that the term Kreol as MoI is locally understood to mean oral MoI/oral support language.

2.4.2.2 Literacy in Kreol in Mauritius

Since the late 1960s, Virahsawmy has held English as MoI responsible for high rates of failure at Std6 level and he has fought for a change to Kreol as MoI (Virahsawmy, 2002). Despite the extensive research on the benefits of the L1 as LoL/MoI as a route to L2 literacy/education (Krashen 2003a: 56), there are factors that explain the inability of Mauritius to turn to Kreol as LoL/ MoI.

First of all, this issue is viewed as a **political and ethnical issue**. The Mauritian population view the debate around Kreol-LoL as a highly politicised and ethnicised²⁰ one, with electoral ramifications. For instance, in February-March 2004, there was a resurgence of the debate about the introduction of Kreol as LoL and MoI. This debate was, arguably, raised as a political counter-balance to the counting of OL in the final aggregate marks of the CPE, in order to appease an ethnic group²¹ and a religious group,²² which associate themselves with Kreol.

There also appears to be **dissonance among local ‘specialists’** (refer to *L’Hebdo*, 16 February 2004, which illustrates this dissonance) on any change in LiEP. Among the proponents of L1 literacy are Dev Virahsawmy (retired academic), LALIT (a Leftist political party), *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* and some academics, such as Arnaud Carpooran. Carpooran, for instance, claims that a change in LoL will positively affect educational outcomes: “Le Créole à l’école est une urgence pédagogique. L’enfant comprendra mieux ce qu’on essaie de lui inculquer. Son esprit développerait plus facilement ses facultés cognitives et analytiques. L’échec scolaire s’en trouverait largement réduit. » (*L’Express*, 9 February 2004) – [Kreol in schools is an urgent matter. The child will better understand what is explained to him/her. His/her mind will develop cognitive and analytical skills. School failure will be reduced.] However, it appears to me that in the quest to fight legitimately for L1 literacy and L1 MoI, there seems to have been an over-emphasis on the language issue, as well as reluctance among some of those

²⁰ The debate is ethnicised because Kreol is associated with the ethnic group called ‘Creoles’, many of whom are descendants of slaves and are socially marginalised. That is why Virahsawmy suggests we should call the language ‘Morisien’.

²¹ The General Population, which includes Creoles.

²² FAPEC – Fédération des Associations de Parents et Enseignants des Ecoles Catholiques.

promoting L1 literacy/MoI to consult theory and empirical studies. One example lies in the press report of a pilot project, headed by Virahsawmy, which has been set up in Catholic pre-vocational schools to assess the potential effects of L1 as LoL/MoI. Preliminary results of a simple test were published in the press (*Le Mauricien*, 14 April 2005) without detailed analyses. Auleear Owodally (*Le Mauricien*, 17 April 2005, 21 April 2005) has pointed out (1) the lack of theoretical framework, (2) the methodological problems found in the project, and (3) the danger of the potential implications and applications of the small-scale project. Virahsawmy (*Le Mauricien*, 19 April 2005) emphasised the need to give (his) experience precedence over theory. It seems to me that any change of LiEP would need theoretical and empirical support, which would persuade the population that the change in educational language policy is based on facts rather than ideology. Conversely, other academics (Auleear Owodally, 2005; Ballgobin, 2006; Mahadeo, 2005, in the local press) have taken a different stand on the issue of L1 literacy, claiming that the present socio-cultural context is not ready for such a change and arguing that the present system should be improved rather than radically changed. In a press interview, Mahadeo (2005) points out that the greatest supporters of L1 literacy send their children to private English-medium and francophone schools, thus making the whole issue of legislation in favour of Kreol LoL and MoI problematic. Although Mahadeo (2005) does not cite names, Mauritius is a small island and it is well-known locally that very often, advocates of L1 literacy/MoI send their children to French/English media private schools/colleges.

The inability of Mauritius to turn to Kreol as LoL/ MoI can also be explained by the fact that the **masses are misinformed** on the issue. It appears doubtful that the Mauritian people actually understand the implications of a possible change in LiEP. It seems that for the newspaper-reading masses, a change in LiEP simply means making official the use of Kreol as oral MoI. In *L'Express* (19 November, 2003), Virahsawmy notes that Mauritians confuse MoI and support language. Indeed, the President of the Government Teachers' Union, who is representative of primary school teachers, uses the term to mean **oral support language**: « Nous ne demandons pas que le Kreol devienne une matière. Le cahier de charge des enseignants est suffisamment lourd! Mais, en temps que medium

d'enseignement, le Kreol est un moyen de rehausser la capacité de lire et d' écrire des écoliers, nous pensons que le Kreol doit être officialisé. Le Kreol est un outil pédagogique et nous fait gagner du temps » (*Week-End*, 2 April 2006). [We do not request Kreol to be taught as a subject. The teachers' workload is already heavy enough. But, if as a MoI, Kreol is used to better the pupils' ability to read and write, we feel that Kreol should be made the official language. Kreol is a tool that facilitates teaching and makes us save time in class.] This clearly shows that not all stakeholders in education work with the same understanding of the terms 'MoI' and 'LoL'.

Parental attitudes also contribute to the present *status quo*. Delpit (1995, cited in Granville *et al.*, 1998: 257) and Muthwii & Kioko (2003: 100) claim that it is crucial for legislators, policy makers and teachers to know about existing attitudes and practices before deciding on and implementing LiEPs. In Mauritius, existing parental attitudes to Kreol as MoI and LoL are unknown. Despite the limitations of census data and self-reports,²³ the 2000 Language and Population Census indicates that while 69.5 % of the population claim to have Kreol as their HL, only 3.3% claim to be literate in Kreol only (**Appendix B, Table (2)**).²⁴ In her study, Atchia-Emmerich (2005: 85), who collected quantitative data from a representative sample of the Mauritian population, found that only 68% of her subjects claimed to be able to write Kreol (against 95% who can speak it). While she found that English and French were the languages most used for note- and letter-writing, she also noted that Kreol was being used for short notes to friends, SMS and e-mails. Compared with Stein's (1982) study, which indicates that 3% of the subjects used Kreol for note writing, Atchia-Emmerich (2005) found that 6% of her subjects used Kreol for note writing. Atchia-Emmerich thus concludes that most Mauritians are not in favour of the use of Kreol as a written language and they make

²³ The survey data were collected from heads of families, who were asked to state the language(s) in which they could, with understanding, both read and write a simple statement in their everyday life. This does not necessarily reveal the literacy skills of the whole family. Moreover, one needs to bear in mind, the limited definition of literacy: for instance, here, a person able to write a basic shopping list and a person able to critically read the newspapers would both be counted as literate. The quantitative statistics thus mask the qualitative nature of the literacy issue in the Mauritian context.

²⁴ The 2000 Census defines 'literacy' as: "the language(s) in which [people] could, with understanding, both read and write a simple statement in their everyday life." This is in line with the 1988 UNESCO definition of literacy: "Functional illiteracy is the inability to use reading and writing with facility in daily life. Widespread illiteracy severely hampers economic and social development. It is also a gross violation of the basic human right to learn, know, and communicate."

limited use of written Kreol because they find it backward to do so. Rajah-Carrim (2007), whose sample is not representative of the Mauritian population, argues that there is no consensus as to whether or not Kreol should be introduced in schools. Taken together, these figures indicate positive attitudes to literacy in the European languages, but rather more negative attitudes to reading and writing in Kreol. This seems typical of English-periphery countries, where the masses feel that support for local languages is a political means of confining them to an inferior position (Phillipson, 1992: 10), of ghettoising them (Webb, 2004). In brief, it appears that L1 education would be seen as disempowering the lower social classes in Mauritius, as it is the case in Singapore (Rubdy, 2005: 59) (Ch2.3.1).

Finally, and maybe significantly so, **the power of English** cannot be underestimated in explaining the survival of the present LiEP. In the international context, English has acquired symbolic power because of its growing use, usefulness and prestige (Bourdieu, 1991). William (1998) claims that, “For stronger global integration, and enhanced individual opportunity, it is not simply the ability to read, but the ability to read in a world language that is important. The world choice in many countries is typically English.” Because it is a tool in the hands of elites, minority communities seek access to English as a means to circumvent the power of these same elites (Schiffman, 2003). On the one hand, providing access to English perpetuates the situation where the dominant language continues to dominate, creating an élite (Adegbite, 2003) and thus reinforcing hegemony of English. On the other hand, providing MT education because of educational benefits is conceived as a conspiracy plan to ghettoise and marginalize certain groups of people. This whole question about the hegemonic place of English in the (postcolonial) world has been addressed in the debate about linguistic imperialism and linguisticism (Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992, 1997). However, uncritically admitting the ‘hegemonic’ place of English on the world scene can be seen as problematical as (1) it fails to consider the sometimes deliberate choices made by governments in former colonised countries and by individuals to teach and learn English, and (2) it has rendered people/nations passive puppets of an ideological order (Eagleton, 1991; Giroux, 1983, cited in Morrison & Lui, 2000). Mauritius is a

democracy and people in democracies have the right to choose what kind of education they want for their children: according to Rajah-Carrim (2007), parents are not ready for a change in LiEP.

The official LiEP is thus unaltered: Kreol is neither taught as a school subject nor used as the written MoI in schools. However, some change has been instituted in Catholic schools. First, there is a literacy programme in Kreol that is available in pre-vocational schools for children who have failed the end-of-primary education exams. The first exams in Kreol were carried out in June - July 2007 (reported in *Le Mauricien*, 3 July 2007). Secondly, there is a pilot study being designed, where Kreol as LoL and MoI will be used in some Catholic primary schools as from 2010 (Harmond, 2007; local press reports - *Le Mauricien*, 21 February 2007).

2.4.3 Qualifying literacy levels of Mauritians

The literacy levels of Mauritians in English and French are described in Table 3.

Table 3: Literacy levels in Mauritius

CPE/SC²⁵ results in English and French (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27117 students were examined at CPE level: 74.4% passed in English and 71.43% passed in French; • Of the 13665 students examined for English at Cambridge SC level, 93% passed (43.4% with credit); whereas of the 16111 students examined in French, 92.2% passed (69.4% with credit).
Monitoring Education For All Goals (MLA)²⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1996: 1596 pupils from 52 primary schools were tested and the results indicate that 69% achieved MML (Minimum Mastery Level) in English while 69.9 % achieved MML in French; • 2000: 1800 Grade 4 level pupils from the 60 primary schools were tested on their English performance. The results indicate that 77.6% achieved MML and only 35.4% achieved DML (Desired Mastery Level). The report indicates that while "students had a good knowledge of vocabulary, they had much difficulty in communicating their thoughts by writing sentences and coherent pieces of prose" (MLA, 2003: Chapter 4).
SACMEQ Reports²⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1998 Report: Data were collected in 1995 from 2919 Std6 students. 52.8% subjects reached the MML, while only 26.7% reached DML (SAQMEQ 1: 67), • 2003 Report: Data were collected in 2001 from 3007 Std6 students. 32.4 % of the subjects were at the pre-reading, emergent reading, basic reading stages, 14.5% were reading for meaning and only 26.3% were capable of complex reading tasks.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that French is tested as a SL and English as an L1 at SC level. We would thus hypothesise that French results should be much better than English results. It is also important to note the high drop-out rate between the CPE and SC exams: the perdition rate is approximately 50%. With the introduction of compulsory education until the age of 16, new percentage passes at CPE and SC levels might indicate more precisely the levels of literacy and the development of literacy skills over the learners' school years. The Cambridge SC results are graded: 1 to 9, with 1 being distinction, up to 6 being with a credit, and 9 being a fail.

²⁶ As a result of the Jomtien Conference (1990), a competency project was launched in Mauritius, with the aim to investigate the percentage of school age children who achieve the minimum score in literacy, numeracy and life skills. In this document, literacy is conceptualised as the ability to read and understand different types of text appropriate for Grade4 level, and to read and write to meet the needs of everyday life and sustain further learning.

²⁷ The definition of literacy is here "the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual."

RCEA (Roman Catholic Education Authorities) ²⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data were collected from 370 Std3 pupils, in 12 primary schools; • The test consisted of a short passage, followed by questions to test reading comprehension; • The results revealed that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 18.3% are fluent readers with comprehension, 2) 15.16% are fluent readers without comprehension, 3) 23.2% are struggler readers with comprehension, 4) 12.7% are struggler readers without comprehension, 5) 29.2% cannot read at all, 6) While 3.2% can re-tell the story of the passage in English, 14.6% are able to do so in French or Kreol.
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The data in Table 3 indicate that the level of **basic** literacy in Mauritius is fairly high. In fact, Mauritius places itself among the top African countries when it comes to **basic** literacy.²⁹ Given the general high level of basic literacy, I refer to Alderson (1984) to argue that the above figures indicate that the ‘literacy problem’ is not a decoding problem: it would seem that learners are able to decode texts and a majority read with basic understanding. It also appears that the language of initial literacy (L2/FL) might not be acting as a major deterrent to basic literacy development, since many children seem to be able to read with basic understanding. However, the language proficiency in L2/FL might be constraining higher levels of literacy skills (that is, reading beyond basic understanding).

The literacy levels can be related to the teaching approach. Griffiths’ study (2000) concludes that classes in primary schools in Mauritius tend to be teacher-centred, with rote and factual teaching, geared towards ‘able’ students and sieving out slow learners,

²⁸ This was reported in *Le Mauricien*, 8 September 2006. It must here be acknowledged that the rigour in the research methodology and findings cannot be guaranteed.

²⁹ MML: Botswana (46.2%), Madagascar (56.9%), Malawi (15.3%), Mali (50.4%), Mauritius (77.6%), Morocco (85.9%), Niger (39.3%), Senegal (45.6%), Tunisia (95.1%), Uganda (64.3%), Zambia (37.8%)
DML: Botswana (6%), Madagascar (20.6%), Malawi (1.4%), Mali (13.14%), Mauritius (35.4%), Morocco (45.5%), Niger (3.6%), Senegal (6.7%), Tunisia (70.8%), Uganda (23.3%), Zambia (7.3%) - (data obtained from Niane, 2003)

while the Russell & Ingram-Hill Report (2006: 21) concludes that the teaching of English focuses mainly on inculcating students with a knowledge of structure and lexis, providing insufficient exposure to English, hence not enabling students to develop communicative skills in English. In fact the MLA (2003: Chapter 4) states that “the strategies for the teaching and learning of English language must be reviewed,” an opinion which finds its echo systematically in the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES)/CPE Reports (1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007 – Refer to **Appendix C.1**). This traditional approach to teaching English can be explained by the downward pressures of exams, in which English has a gate-keeping function.

The teaching of English at the primary and secondary levels emphasises a preparation for exams. In fact, Mauritius is a country where exams are so important that private tuition is a thriving business (Ballgobin, 2006: *Mauritius Times*; Foondun, 2002). Success at the exams is nationally recognised through the Laureate System, which grants scholarships to the best HSC-results students to enable them to go to the UK and Australia for further studies. The proclamation of laureates is an annual event, which is given high media coverage and this contributes to creating an aura about exams success in the local context. This situation triggers a competitive and exams-oriented education system, which in turn affects classroom teaching and learning experiences (Spratt, 2005). A similar trend has been observed in such countries as Lesotho and Singapore. Polaki (1996, cited in Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005) discusses the case of Lesotho, where the teachers’ strong desire to attain high pass rates in public exams lead them to adopt teacher-centred strategies. For instance, teachers explain and give exercises, they use question and answer strategies, they utilise exposition/consolidation/practice techniques. Cheah (1998: 193) points out that the culture of exams is rooted in the Singaporean psyche: exams are the soul of the ethos about education in East Asian societies. Hence, reading and writing practices are shaped by the demands of exams, as well as the beliefs about what constitutes literacy, beliefs that value rote learning, memorisation, imitating, copying of texts, all of which are in contradiction with some Western beliefs of creative and individualistic responses to texts (evidence cited in Wright, 2001: 62). Cheah (1998) argues that when there is linguistic insecurity, the backwash effect of exams is amplified.

This exams-oriented set-up favours more traditional approaches to teaching oral English and reading/writing. By way of example, while intensive reading is part of the Mauritian primary and secondary school classroom, extensive reading is less present. This practice of intensive reading - where teachers and students read a short text and then explain difficult words, as a preparation for the exam - does not emphasise the need for vocabulary development in their context and does not conceive of reading as a participatory social constructive activity. Consequently, vocabulary development takes place more as a result of direct instruction in the classroom context, than indirect exposure through pleasurable reading. This pedagogical approach downplays the importance of oral proficiency development alongside reading proficiency, it downplays the broader goal of reading which is to create and gain meaning from texts.

According to a primary school inspector, “the backwash effect of the national examinations at the primary level is affecting the pre-primary curriculum in many schools” (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 68). Since my study focuses on the final preschool year, I situate the primary curriculum, before focusing on the Std1 textbook.

2.4.4 The curriculum

When Mauritius was a British colony, it relied on the mother-country for its curriculum. After independence, and since the 1970s, several attempts have been made to propose a curriculum adapted to the Mauritian needs and realities, through the institution of bodies made responsible for curriculum development. In 1975, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) was established. One of its aims was curriculum development, a task that has been taken over by the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD) although there are resource persons from the MIE. The main events related to the primary school are described in **Appendix C.2**.

According to Georgescu (2006), curriculum documents in Mauritius (such as textbooks, syllabuses and *Learning Competencies for All*) are “rich and inspiring”. The historical review of the development of the primary curriculum indicates that attempts have been made to write down curricula and engage in curriculum reforms in the 80s. A

comprehensive primary school syllabus was produced in 1985 in the form of *Syllabuses for Primary Schools, Standards 1 to 6*. However, with time, this document has been forgotten in the archives of the Ministry of Education. My reading of the *Syllabuses for Primary Schools, Standards 1 to 6* (1985) indicates that it contains the essence of a curriculum potentially relevant to Mauritius: it is a comprehensive document, which clearly articulates educational objectives, specific objectives, methodology and course content for each subject (English, French, Maths, EVS, Creative Education, Movement Education, Oriental languages) for each primary class. The concept of scaffolding is implicit in the curriculum, with each level building upon the previous level. In this sense, I would argue that this document resembles the 2002 South African RNCS, the only difference being that the Mauritian document predates the South African document by two decades. However, the critique that I can make of this document is that it does not explicitly acknowledge that learning English is also learning to read and write in English, and that it can be a feat for child foreign language learners.

In the absence of a curriculum framework document, curriculum reform tends to have been associated with the production of new school textbooks. The most recent 2006 Std1 English textbooks, produced in the spirit of another 'curriculum reform', was written by one MIE resource person and two primary school teachers, who did not know of the existence of the 1985 syllabus and who were not given access to it by the MoE officials who commissioned the writing of the textbook. This textbook, written within a curriculum reform framework, actually predates the writing of the national curriculum framework itself (Baichoo,³⁰ 2007, p.c.). Hence, in the past decades, curriculum reforms seem to have been equated with including new subjects in the school syllabus and writing school textbooks and/or revising existing textbooks.

Despite the various curriculum reforms, the CPE exams results indicate that these reforms have not positively impacted on schools (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006). One reasons for this could be that although curriculum reforms have led to the creation of committees to

³⁰ Ms R. Baichoo is a lecturer in English, Department of English, Mauritius Institute of Education. She was the co-ordinator, and the MIE resource person, for the writing of the 2006 Std1 English textbook. She is also involved in writing the new curriculum framework.

work on the changes, many of these committees and curriculum reforms have not survived the change of political regime (Mauritius has lived through regular political alternation, with a new government at nearly each general election). There has been absence of any systematic enquiry and educational diagnosis, with certain troubling questions not addressed, such as: how much do children learn at school? Is it enough? (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 33). There has been, and continues to be, an absence of research on curriculum development in Mauritius. The NCCRD, whose mission is to do research, does not have a permanent staff or a library. Its role limits itself to convening meetings for the development of curricula and materials, and to distributing textbooks to primary schools (UNESCO, 2003). Finally, the preparation for implementation of curriculum reforms has been done on an *ad hoc* basis (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 33), with a lack of strategy statement on the management of the reforms, especially the pedagogical dimension (Georgescu, 2006).

The curriculum is, thus, a problematical aspect of the educational set-up of Mauritius.

2.4.5 Standard1

2.4.5.1 Characterising lower primary education

Lower primary education is characterised by a **linguistic shock for Std1 children**. As they enter primary school, they are taught English, French and the Oriental languages (optional) as subjects. Furthermore, English is used as a **written** MoI (English, Maths and EVS textbooks/exams are in English). However, Kreol and French are used as support oral languages to varying degrees (Féral and Aulecar Owodally, 2003). In brief, in Std1, Mauritian children have to learn to read and as well as read to learn (Pretorius & Ribbens, 2005) in an FL. In the midst of constant curriculum renewal, the locally produced textbooks are the main reference documents that contain the aims and objectives of the various stages of primary education: in fact, they are the curriculum for teachers and learners (as is the case in other contexts: Huang, 2004, talks of China; Mbatha, 2002: 71, describes Swaziland). In this context, I refer to the Std1 textbooks as being the main written document for Std1.

The three Std1 textbooks produced in English and which are compulsory for all children are: English, Mathematics, and Environmental Studies (EVS). In this section, I refer to the 2004-2005 Std1 pupil textbooks because the subjects from whom data were collected for this thesis used this textbook. They have been replaced by the 2007 Std1 textbooks. Those await critical analysis.

2.4.5.2 Std 1 textbooks: Tirvassen's analysis and my analysis

Tirvassen's (2001: 74-80) preliminary analysis of Std1 English and Maths textbooks indicates a larger number of English words in the Maths textbook (n=172), compared with the English textbook (n=72). I replicated his work, while addressing the methodological limitations of his preliminary study (**Appendix D** for raw data):

- He looked only at the English and Maths textbooks: I considered the English, Maths and EVS Std1 (2004-5) textbooks;
- He counted content words: for Tirvassen (2001), function words like *is*, *am*, *an*, *the* are not included in his list of words, I considered both content and function words;
- He counted *read* and *reading* as the same word: I treated them separately because, arguably for a child learning English as an FL, these would be two words.

My findings are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Std1 textbooks

Textbook	Findings
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first half of the pupils' textbook (1) contains mainly pictures, where teachers are expected to introduce children to English orally before teaching them to read and write in English; (2) encourages children to start identifying the letters of the alphabet; • The second half of the textbook introduces children to the whole written word/simple phrases in English; • The textbook introduces children to 95 words; • The textbook is characterised by repetition: for instance, the word <i>boy</i> appears 10 times, <i>cat</i> 8 times, and <i>woman</i> 7 times.
Maths and EVS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Maths textbook makes use of 243 words and the EVS textbook of 332 words; • There is a disparity in the vocabulary in the English vs. Maths/EVS textbooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ While the English, Maths and EVS textbooks contain 570 words, only 16 % of these words actually appear in the English textbook, ◦ Out of the 332 English words that appear in the EVS textbook, only 36 (10.8%) appear in the English textbook; and out of the 243 English words that appear in the Maths textbook, 28 (11.5%) appear in the English book, ◦ Children are expected to make complex operations, which presuppose English language proficiency, not yet developed in the English syllabus. For instance, the first page of the Maths textbook, which has two activities, read "Colour the circles green" and "In each set, colour the smaller circle red."

Tirvassen (2001: 74) says that « Un survol des connaissances et aptitudes développées dans le cours d'anglais en première année du primaire montre que les concepteurs du manuel tentent d'établir un équilibre entre le développement d'une fine psycho-motricité nécessaire au passage à l'écrit (lecture et écriture) et la maîtrise de la langue » - [The knowledge and aptitudes that are developed in the Std1 English curriculum show that the textbook writers try to establish a balance between the development of motor skills needed for writing and a mastery of the language]. I agree with and add on to Tirvassen's (2001: 74) analysis that the English textbook aims: (1) to introduce children to oral English, (2) to develop children's psychomotor skills, (3) to introduce the children to the

alphabet, and (4) to use the look-and-say method to introduce children to reading in English. The English textbook thus assumes that children do not know any English, or the basics of reading and writing (the alphabet, for instance). This assumption is in contradiction with the Maths and EVS textbooks that contain written English instructions (including cognitive verbs like *comparing* and *arranging in order*). Such cognitively challenging vocabulary presupposes that children understand some English, have knowledge of basic literacy skills and are ready to be taught cognitively complex operations in English. Finally, the English textbook differs from the French textbook: on the first pages of the English textbook, there are only etchings which suggest that English is being introduced orally to children, while on the first page of the French textbook appears a text (Auleear Owodally, 2007), suggesting that children are already familiar with oral French and that an eclectic approach (the phonics/whole language) is used to teach literacy in French.

This lack of planning, coherence and continuity across the Std1 textbooks may be explained by the fact that the English, Maths and EVS panels worked separately and independently on revising the textbooks (Ramjaun,³¹ 2006, p.c.). This lack of coherence is found in other contexts as well. For instance, researchers have demonstrated a gap between the English taught as a subject in early grades and the English appearing in content course books at the moment of transition to English as MoI in other African contexts (Zambia: Williams, 1998, and South Africa: McDonald, 1990).

The implications of this incoherence are two-fold. First, the Std1 might create the space for inequality (Tirvassen, 2001). Children who have parental support will be at an advantage compared with those who do not. Bourdieu & Passeron (1990: 99) contend that education systems frequently address themselves only to students who possess particular linguistic and cultural capital, and who are able to benefit from them. Secondly, the Std1 has a pushdown effect on the preschool sector. Aware of this, Dr. Naeck (2006, p.c.), lecturer at the MIE, has suggested the need for a Year 0 to ensure a

³¹ Mrs Ramjaun was, at the time of the interview (April 2006), lecturer in English at the MIE. She was on the panel for the revision of the 2005 primary school English textbook.

smooth transition between the preschool and primary school, while Assoc. Prof. R. Maudhoo (2006, p.c.)³² recommends “harmonisation in transition,” with the preschool and Std1 merging in terms of materials, contents, approach and methodology. In 2005, the government initiated a project ‘Bridging the Gap’ which aims at “eliminating the feeling of estrangement and alienation the child feels when he enters a primary school away from his family and building a strong and sustainable pedagogical link between the preschool programme and the first term of standard one” (reported in *L'Express*, 3 July 2007).

This brings us to the preschool sector in Mauritius.

2.4.6 Brief background to pre-primary education in Mauritius

The main features of the pre-primary education sector are briefly described below (refer to **Appendix E** for a more detailed description):

- 1) **Status:** Unlike other African countries, Mauritius has attained universal primary education and near universal preschool education. Although preschool education in Mauritius is not compulsory, a wide range of services is available;
- 2) **Enrolment in preschools:** There has been an increase in enrolment from 95% in 2000 to 99% in 2003 (*Quality Education for All*, 2003), but this has gone down to 96% in 2004, 94% in 2005 (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2005), and 95% in 2006 (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2006);
- 3) **Number of preschools** (March 2006): There are 1087 preschools - 77% are privately run institutions, 17% are in government primary school premises housing some 6743 children, 6% are administered by Roman Catholic Authorities (figures cited by *L'Express*, 22 May 2007);
- 4) **Staff** (March 2006): 2527 teachers and 896 non-teaching staff are employed in registered preschools. Most teachers (99%) are women. The teacher: pupil ratio is 15:1;

³² Lecturer at the MIE, as well as the coordinator of the 2003PPG and the preschool teacher training programmes.

- 5) **Monthly fees for private preschools:** The fees are wide-ranging, indicating disparities in the quality of education provided. In 2007, the fees ranged between Rs500 and Rs5500 per month (cited in *L'Express*, 22 May 2007);³³
- 6) **Budget (2005-2006):** 1.6% of the budget is allocated to the preschool sector, compared to 28.7% to the primary and 41.2% to the secondary education sector. There is a government subsidy of Rs200 per month for each child attending a registered preschool;
- 7) **The role of NGOs:** Various NGOs have participated in the development of preschool education. Each NGO has its own stance on the language issue. The Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire (OMEP) is in favour of the use of Kreol, French and English, and defends the place of French in preschool education sector because of its extended social use in Mauritius. Conversely, the Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP) has defended the use of the mother tongue as the means of communication and the initial language of literacy, with priority to English (rather than French) as the L2 in preschools (refer to **Appendix E.2** for a more detailed analysis of their contribution);
- 8) **Educational Reports:**
 - The 1978 Glover Report stressed that “the pre-primary should, without being devoted to formal education of any kind, be spent in preparing the child for the primary stage so as to lessen the burden he will have to carry in Standards 1 and 2” (p.12);
 - The 1979 Richards Report claimed that the “petites miss” [small teachers] tend to use English and French because they teach the Std1 syllabus (English/French) in preschool. The Report recommended that the language of the environment be used in preschools;

³³ The fees ranged between less than Rs200 and more than Rs1 000 monthly in 1998. According to the 1998 Pre-School Trust Fund Board (1998: 4) Report, the cost of monthly fees in preschools are as follows:

- Below Rs200 – 38%
- Rs201-Rs400 – 53%
- Rs401 – Rs1400 – 6.8%
- More than Rs1000 – 1.6%
- In 2005, the fees ranged between Rs200 and Rs2000 in 2005 (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 66).
- In 2007, the fees range between Rs500 and Rs5500 per month - Figures cited in *L'Express*, 22 May 2007.

- The 1983 Glover Report suggested (1) better planning at preschool level, and (2) the writing of a document, a “curriculum”, which will help standardise practices in preschools;
- Later documents and reports (1984 White Paper, 1990 Ramdoyal Report) concentrated on extending preschool education to all parts of the island, providing adequate infrastructure and training preschool teachers;
- The 1998 Action Plan suggested an early childhood curriculum with language and literacy being among the developmental areas. The goal of the plan was to have a full bilingual programme (proficiency and literacy in both languages, which I understand to be English and French);
- The assumption underlying many of the official documents about the function of preschool education is that it is a preparation for primary education (1979 Richards Report, 1991 Master Plan, 1998 Action Plan: refer to **Appendix F** for an overview of the educational reports).

2.4.7 Language policy in the preschool sector

While the colonial LiEP, which shapes the present Mauritian education system, unambiguously states that the written and oral medium of communication/instruction is English as from Std4, the language policy relevant to the pre-Std4 phase is left to the care of the Minister. Although the document does not explicitly refer to the preschool sector (this can be understood in the context where this LiEP pre-dates pre-primary education), it seems to me that in its formulation, the colonial LiEP (Ch2.4.2) permits the use of Kreol as LoL and MoI in the preschool and in Std1 to Std3. However, in practice, English has been since colonial times and still is the written MoI in Std1. This *de facto* LiEP has repercussions on the preschool sector, as seen in the 2003PPG (p.40), which asserts the importance of English in the Mauritian education system:

Since English is the official language throughout the education system, and English is the medium of instruction at a higher level of primary school, it is only logical that through songs or poetry, a child will learn some English daily in relation to the theme being worked on.

(refer to **Appendix G** for extracts from the 2003PPG on the language/literacy issue). Hence, English has become the *de facto* written MoI at preschool level.

2.4.8 Curricula

Since curricula are socially and contextually constructed events, they are “created by people within temporal, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004: 62; a view shared by Clark (1987: xii) mentioned in Richards (2001: 90)), curricula should also be contextually understood and interpreted. I here briefly describe the context of the writing and publication of the two curricula, which have been produced in Mauritius: the 1997 *Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines* (1997PPG) and the 2003 *Pre-School Programme Guidelines* (2003PPG).

2.4.8.1 The 1997 Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines

The 1997PPG was launched on 19 March 1997 by the then Minister of Education. At the launching ceremony, the Minister emphasised that the qualities of adaptation and accessibility of the programme would have to be assessed by Dr. Tirvassen (Secretary on the Committee) and Ida Coombes (President of the Task Force) before being finalised for end-1997. Dr Tirvassen, himself said that, “Nous aurons donc une première évaluation avant de plancher sur la version définitive du document.” [We will thus have a first assessment exercise before working on the final version of the document] (reported in *Le Mauricien*, 20 March 1997). At the time of publication, the 1997PPG was praised in the press for the emphasis it placed on the introduction to English and French, to counteract earlier currents where only the mother tongue had been recommended for the preschool sector. However, one of the criticisms that can be aimed at the 1997PPG is that this curriculum was neither implemented (not even on a pilot basis) nor evaluated before being officially released. A brief chronology of the events surrounding the publication of the 1997PPG is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Events following the publication of the 1997PPG

Date	Event
9 April 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responsible of the Federation of Pre-school Playgroups (FPSP), Mrs. P. Lallah, claimed, in an affidavit, that the introduction of the PPG “will cause much prejudice and sufferings to the majority.” Mrs. P. deposed a demand of writ in Supreme Court to request the use of Creole and Bhojpuri as media for learning in preschools. (reported in <i>Le Mauricien</i> 10 April 1997 and <i>L’Express</i>, 11 April 1997)
May 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A case was entered in the Supreme Court by the FPSP and two parents challenged the constitutionality of the 1997PPG. The challenge was based on discrimination on the basis of language and freedom of expression, protected under the Constitution, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In fact, in 1990, Mauritius had ratified the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child in which it is mentioned that the child has the right to be taught in his/her L1. Professor Derek Bickerton, Linguist and Emeritus Professor at the University of Hawai, and Dr Neville Alexander, from the University of Cape Town and also Chairman of the Language Task Group in South Africa, agreed to appear as expert witnesses in this case.
May 1997 - January 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of the case lodged in court and until the case appeared in court on 15 January 1998, the distribution of the 1997 PPG was halted: some 1600 (out of 3000) had already been distributed (reported in <i>L’Express</i>, 4 September 1997).
12 December 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The State Law Office advised the plaintiffs that the MoE was not going to defend the case (reported in <i>Le Mauricien</i>, 12 January 1998.)
23 March 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government announced that it would commission a new curriculum, which would take into account the linguistic environment of the child.

In the face of such serious reactions against the 1997PPG, Dr Tirvassen defended the 1997PPG by saying that the curriculum writers took into account current pedagogical practices, the exigencies of preschool education, the 1957 Education Ordinance and the children’s linguistic needs, in order to facilitate their transition to Std1 (reported in *le Mauricien*, 7 May 1997 and *Le Mauricien*, 5 September 1997). Dr Tirvassen claimed

that the language issue at preschool level was not a matter for a Court of Law, but a case of political will to change the LiEP.

In terms of content, the 1997PPG is a subject area curriculum and is divided into seven subject areas (i) languages, (ii) plastic arts, (iii) Mathematics, (iv) Science, (v) Social Science, (vi) Music, (vii) Physical Education and Movement. The 'languages' section' is further divided into: *Introduction*, *The English Programme*, *The French Programme*. In the *Introduction* to the 'language' section, it is written that "one of the aims of pre-primary education should be the overall development of the child so that he/she is ready for formal education at the primary level" (1997PPG: 9). The 1997PPG aims to prepare the Mauritian child for formal and compulsory primary education.

2.4.8.2 The 2003 Pre-School Programme Guidelines

After the removal from circulation of the 1997PPG, the Pre-School Trust Fund (PSTF) started working on a new preschool curriculum in May 1998. In October 1998, a document was ready. However, Prof Marjorie Ebbeck (UNICEF) suggested significant changes to the document (reported by A. Rajoo 'Infanticide Scolaire', *Le Militant*, 12 February 1999). The revised document came out in December 2003. In the meantime, the accredited teacher training programmes were already running. Hence, the teacher training programmes actually predate the 2003PPG. In fact, the curriculum borrowed heavily from the teacher training manuals (TTM; for instance, 2003PPG: 36-56 nearly replicates P8: 99-121). Some of the characteristics of the 2003PPG are enumerated below:

- 1) The aim of the 2003PPG is "to provide high quality and harmonized early education for all children" (2003PPG: iv): First of all, this discourse reiterates what was said at the ADEA Biennale Meeting held in Mauritius from 3 - 6 December 2003. Secondly, the term 'high quality education' begs for a definition. The position statement of the International Reading Association (IRA, 2005) clearly states that, "High-quality preschool experiences that successfully foster early language and literacy skills are laying a critical foundation for children's future success." UNICEF (2000) (cited in ADEA, 2003: 48) proposes that quality education consists of five characteristics:

“learners who are healthy and ready to learn, environments that are safe and adequately resourced; content reflected in relevant curricula for acquiring basic skills; processes that use child-centred learning; and outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes to national educational goals and civic participation.” The difference in the proposed definitions shows that there are various definitions of “quality” and the term cannot be transferred cross-border. There is arguably no such thing as a universal concept of quality (Aboud, 2006, citing Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Myers, 2004);

- 2) The aim of the 2003PPG is also to facilitate the transition from the home to the school and to prepare Mauritian children for “reading, mathematics and language achievement.” Mauritius is not the only country where pre-primary education has this role, the same is found in developed countries like England. OFFSTED 1993A sees education for under-fives as “[enabling] children to learn and develop skills, attitudes and understanding which prepares them for continuing education, in particular Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum” (Rodger, 1994: 16). Similarly, in the US and Australia (Dockett & Perry, 2002; Graue, 1992), in Thailand (Dunn & Dasananda, 1995), in Singapore (Seng, 1994), there has been a steady shift in emphasis from a view that by the end of non-compulsory schooling children are ready to learn, to the widely accepted notion that children should be ready for school by then (cited in O’Gorman *et al.*, 2004);
- 3) The entire document is in English and it mentions the importance of English in the preschool as a stepping-stone to primary education;
- 4) In line with the proposals made in the 1998 Action Plan, the 2003PPG proposes to take a child-centred approach; an activity-oriented and integrated/holistic/thematic approach, instead of a subject-area approach (as in the 1997PPG),³⁴ where activities and projects are planned for children; a multicultural approach, where the school builds on home experiences; and an approach where play and developmentally appropriate practices are seen as ways for children to develop physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally, morally and spiritually;

³⁴ The different components of the 2003PPG are: Pre-School Education, The Pre-School Programme, Child development, Achieving competencies, the Child, Parents, the School.

- 5) Like the South African RNCS (2002), the planning approach that the 2003PPG claims to take is “outcomes based” (2003PPG: 52), emphasising that outcomes must be “individualised in keeping with the individual differences between children”;
- 6) It is produced under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, the MIE and the UNICEF, with a pool of contributors: the PSTF (Pre-School Trust Fund), the Association pour la Promotion de la Petite Enfance, Bethléem School, FPSP (Federation of Pre-school Playgroups) and l’OMEP (Organisation Mondiale pour l’Education Préscolaire). Maudho (26.6.06, p.c.) insists that the suggestions and contributions of all stakeholders were taken into consideration in the writing of the document. Maudho says that this probably explains why there was consensus around the programme, the first educational programme in Mauritius to have total consensus despite the particularities of the sector, which contains partners from the public as well as the private sector;
- 7) It claims to have been piloted in some 150 preschools (2003PSPG: v): I understand that the teacher training (course and manuals), which predates the 2003PPG and which is then used as a basis to write the curriculum, might be the pilot study here referred to.

A comparison between the two preschool curricula indicates that curriculum writers influence curricula contents. While an academic (R.Tirvassen) and a native English speaker (I.Coombes, who has now opened an English medium school) wrote the 1997PPG and emphasised the European languages, a pool of contributors including overtly pro-Kreol individuals were involved in the writing up of the 2003PPG and emphasised the home language. The FPSP (Federation of Pre-school Playgroups) is one such pro-Kreol group. They have always fought for mother tongue literacy and education. They were involved in the removal from circulation of the 1997PPG.

2.4.9 Accredited teacher training programmes

Teacher training programmes being curricula within the larger curricula (Johnson 1989: 10), I now briefly consider the main accredited teacher training programmes. I must here open a parenthesis to point out that in the early 1980s, in-service preschool teachers

had already been offered a non-accredited teacher training course by the then PPU (Pre-Primary Unit). In mid-1990s, two accredited, part-time, distance, in-service programmes, were serviced by the MIE (Mauritius Institute of Education) in collaboration with the MCA (Mauritius College of the Air): the *Teacher Proficiency for Preschool Teachers* (as from 2000) and the *Teacher's Certificate* (as from 1994). (Refer to **Appendix E.3** for the organisation of and extracts from TT Manuals).

2.5 Summary of chapter

Based on my reading and understanding of the literature reviewed in this chapter, I have compiled Table 6, which is a summary of the various contexts reviewed, and which helps me adopt a comparative approach in my analysis.

Table 6: A comparative analysis of post-colonial contexts reviewed

Country	Sociolinguistic context	Comments on the status of English	LiEP in primary education	Pre-primary sector
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official multilingualism ▪ African languages have no local/ international cachet ▪ Parents/teachers have positive attitudes towards English, preferring English education to education in African languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hegemony of English: Language of education and job market ▪ Increasing demand for English as Mol in schools, especially by parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additive approach to multilingualism ▪ Availability of MT education but inadequate preparation of African languages, lack of teacher training and teaching materials ▪ % enrolment in 2004 not available ▪ Literacy rates for youth: 93.9% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother tongue education as from Grade R ▪ RNCS (2002) includes curriculum for Reception Year ▪ Different curricula for English as home language, English as first additional language or English as second additional language in Grade R ▪ Phasing in of Grade R, with the target to have all learners enrolled in accredited Reception Year programmes by 2010³⁵ ▪ In 2006, 441621 children were in Grade R: this figure represents approximately half of the children who will go to Grade 1³⁶ ▪ In 2002/3, 12 % of 54 503 preschool teachers were trained ▪ In 2003, R1212 per learner of public expenditure is allocated to public funded Grade R

³⁵ UNESCO. (2006). South Africa. Early Childhood Care and Education Programmes. UNESCO International Bureau of Education, Geneva, Switzerland.

³⁶ Department of Education, South Africa. (2006). School Realities. Available on <http://www.education.gov.za>. Accessed 31 May 2007.

Botswana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two official languages: Setswana and English Educators support English as Mol Parents prefer their children to speak English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English needed for jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setswana is the Mol in Year 1 and English is Mol as from Year 2 105% enrolment in 2004 Literacy rates for youth: 94% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not compulsory Government has worked on policy document for sector 1993 NCE proposed that children in preschools be taught in their dominant language, with a slow introduction of Setswana and English Tendency among teachers to teach English formally in preschools No figures as to enrolment in 2004 % of Public expenditure allocated to education not available
Zambia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official language: English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zambian officials insisted on teaching English as from Year 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial reading skills introduced in L1, with English taught as a subject as from Year 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not compulsory MoE intends to set up preschool facilities No figures as to enrolment in 2004
Seychelles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official languages: Seychelles Creole, French and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 1992, less time for Creole and more time for English in schools MoE is interested in enhancing pupils' competence in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creolisation of education system, with Creole as Mol in Years 1 and 2 English is Mol as from Year 3 110% enrolment in 2004 Literacy rates for youth: 99.1% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not compulsory, but free (from preschool upwards) 99% of children attend preschool Since 1994, the government proposed that (oral and written) English be introduced in preschools 102% enrolment in 2004 9 % of public expenditure allocated to preschool education

Swaziland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official languages: iSwati and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entry tests for primary schools carried out in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ iSwati Mol in lower grades ▪ Transition to English in Year 4 ▪ 99 % enrolment in 2002 ▪ Literacy rates for youth: 88.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not compulsory ▪ 1988 National Curriculum Plan ▪ Seems that preschools teach mainly reading and writing and that L1 is not Mol ▪ Entrance exams put pressure on preschool sector ▪ No figures as to enrolment in 2004 ▪ 0% of Public expenditure allocated to education
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official multilingualism ▪ Spread of English as home language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Careful political engineering to spread English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English as Mol ▪ Home languages taught as L2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not compulsory, preschools are private (ie, fee-paying) ▪ 99% children go to preschool ▪ Plan to include last year of pre-primary education in education but idea abandoned because of cost ▪ <i>A Framework for a Kindergarten Curriculum in Singapore</i>, prepared by MoE ▪ Parents prefer their children to spend time on English at preschool because they see it as preparation for primary education ▪ No official figures on enrolment on Singapore MoE website³⁷

³⁷ Ministry of Education, Singapore. Educational Factsheet 2006.

Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Official trilingualism and biliteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MoE invests in teaching of English ▪ Parents prefer English to Chinese medium schools ▪ Better access to jobs if speak English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MT education ▪ Teach English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not compulsory, privately run (ie, fee paying) ▪ 95% children go to preschool ▪ All preschools are privately run ▪ Children taught to speak Cantonese, and are introduced to Mandarin and English (oral and written) ▪ 1996 <i>Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum</i> ▪ 2006 <i>Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum</i>
Mauritius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is <i>de facto</i> official language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is not a social language, like French. Kreol is the <i>lingua franca</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English is the LoL and written MoL throughout the education system ▪ 103 % enrolment in 2004 ▪ Literacy rates for youth: 94.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not compulsory ▪ 95% enrolment in 2006 ▪ Government has produced two preschool curricula (1997, 2003) ▪ 1.6% of public expenditure allocated to preschool education

Note: Figures for Pre-primary and primary enrolment, % of government expenditure on education, literacy rates, from UNESCO (2005).

2.6 Chapter 2 as point of departure for my own study

In this chapter, I have reviewed the LiEP in four African, two Asian and one African-Asian (Mauritius) postcolonial settings and considered, in the face of paucity of materials, the apparent impact of the LiEP on the preschool sector. From the analysis carried out in this chapter and summed up in Table 6, one can observe that:

- Multilingualism is a characterising feature of all ex-colonies;
- Despite the existence of multilingualism, English is still valued as a high prestige language;
- Although English is rarely used as a home language, it has retained a choice place in the LiEP: some countries have simply retained English as the MoI; others, who have turned to L1 literacy and L1 MoI, have included a transition to English at MoI at some point in the primary education system;
- The education sector in the various ex-colonies has shown keen interest in raising the levels of English;
- All countries reviewed indicate high enrolment at primary level;
- For the preschool sector:
 - Pre-primary education is not compulsory;
 - Preschools tend to be privately run;
 - Figures are not always readily available as to the enrolment of children in the sector;
 - In countries where figures are available as to government expenditure on the preschool sector, it seems that very little of the government budget is allocated;
 - However, there has been a rising consciousness as to the importance of the sector as seen in the government planning to build preschools and publishing preschool curricula guidelines;
 - The “hunger for English is becoming a universal phenomenon” (Tickoo, 2006: 170) and the ‘English fever’ (Krashen, 2003b) has trickled down (officially or unofficially) to the preschool sector, through the ‘English push-down’ effect (O’Gorman *et al.*, 2004). The term ‘pushdown’ has

been used to describe the backwash effect of the primary school curriculum on the pre-primary curriculum, leading it to be more formal, in many contexts like Australia (Corne, 1999, Grieshaber, 2000). O’Gorman *et al.* (2004) say that in countries like the USA and Australia, there has been a shift in emphasis from the view that by the end of non-compulsory schooling children are ready to learn to the now-widely accepted view that children should be ready for school (Dockett & Perry, 2002). However, the critique that can be made from the cases reviewed is that this push-down and the international race for English has often happened in preschool policy/practice in a disorganised and haphazard manner;

- There is a paucity of research in the sector: few empirical studies have addressed the language issue at preschool level in the developing world.

The above contextual review has pointed out the lack of a theoretical framework to address the research questions articulated in Ch1. The next chapter describes my critical excursion in the existing and relevant literature, in search of conceptual and methodological tools.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical underpinnings

3.1 Introduction

In Ch1.4, I set out with a fairly broad working description of literacy as a starting point for this research, emphasising that that early literacy refers to a set of skills that children acquire, learn, develop and use in specific social, cultural and linguistic contexts. The contextual review in Ch2 revealed a paucity of empirical research on early literacy development in multilingual contexts, like Mauritius. The aim of Ch3 is to find some “anchor points” (Hamilton, 2006) in the existing literature on early literacy, so as to develop and refine a theoretical and conceptual framework that will allow me to address the research questions posed in Ch1.8.

Since this thesis deals with the period preceding the formal introduction to reading and writing in primary school, I have drawn heavily on the literature that discusses children’s entrance into the world of literacy - **Emergent Literacy**. I have focused more particularly on the Evidence-Based Reading Research movement within the Emergent Literacy approach because of its potential to impact on educational practices. Moreover, given my focus on a context where an FL is the LoL, I have drawn upon the literature on **second/foreign language/literacy learning and teaching**. In the context where my initial working definition of literacy pointed out the importance of the social and cultural context of literacy development, I have also reviewed the literature on **New Literacies**. I have chosen this literature, which adopts a sociocultural approach, because it has been used in research contexts sharing important similarities with Mauritius. Finally, in my quest for appropriate methodological tools, I have reviewed the few empirical studies on emergent literacy development in postcolonial settings.

3.2 The entrance into the world of literacy

The two main approaches used to study the period preceding formal literacy learning are the reading readiness approach and the emergent literacy approach. The **reading readiness approach** views literacy primarily as a maturational process (Durkin, 1966; Gesell, 1925), where children are thought to be ready for formal instruction when they are able to perform certain auditory, visual, psychomotor and linguistic tasks (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006: 262). The limitation of this approach is that, while it concentrates on children's readiness to read, it disregards the importance of the opportunities available to children to develop reading skills (Durkin, 2004: 66). This approach hence downplays the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992) that children bring along with them as they engage in formal literacy.

The **Emergent Literacy** (henceforth, **EL**) **approach**, a term coined by Marie Clay (1966) to describe the reading and writing behaviours that precede and develop into conventional literacy (Sulzby, 1985, 1986), questions the basic tenets of the reading readiness perspective. EL takes a social constructivist approach, arguing that children construct their own concepts about the functions and uses of literacy, based on their own experience of the environment in which they grow. This EL approach is neo-Piagetian in its emphasis on children's active role in discovering about literacy: a fundamental principle underlying Piaget's theory is that knowledge is constructed through the action of the learner (Piaget, 1971). The action is physical (for instance, a baby knows that a rattle makes noise by banging it) or mental (the learner processes the information s/he receives mentally to learn it) (Trawick-Smith, 2003: 50). This EL approach is also neo-Vygotskian in its recognition of the effect of informed others on literacy development: Vygotsky (1978) has argued that interaction and conversation with people influence children's thinking. Children, thus, get support from a more competent peer or from an adult. This support that children get in order to move one step further in their cognitive development is called scaffolding (Bruner, 1983). The EL approach thus considers and values children's literacy development before the onset of formal instruction (Gunn *et al.*, 1995, quote Hiebert & Papierz, 1990; Mason & Allen, 1986; McGee & Lomax, 1990;

Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1987; and van Kleeck, 1990, on this issue). It also takes into account the period that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge that, in turn, eases entrance into formal reading. This approach became dominant in the field of early reading and writing in the 1980s and 1990s (Vukelich & Christie, 2004: 5).

Within the EL perspective, the **Evidence-Based Reading Research** movement (henceforth, **EBRR**) claims that experimental research (largely correlational studies) can reveal the skills children need to become proficient readers and writers. The landmark book within this tradition is Adams' (1990) *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*, which set the pace for a number of empirical investigations, as well as became the basis for Intervention Programmes such as *Head Start*, *Good Start-Grow Smart*, and *Early Reading First* (Vukelich & Christie, 2004: 10-11). These programmes aim to stop the spiral of reading and educational failure before it starts. It is this body of research that I henceforth review because it has the potential to enlighten us on important educational issues, as well as contribute to guide pedagogical practices.

3.3 The role of EL in educational development

Acknowledging that literacy development begins during infancy (Scarborough, 2002, and Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002, cited in Aram & Biron, 2004), EBRR makes some proposals:

- 1) There is the need to consider the very foundations of literacy (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994; Sénéchal *et al.*, 1998) because literacy constitutes the basis of later literacy development, learning and scholastic achievement (Aram & Levin, 2001: 832; Bennett *et al.*, 2002; Cummins, 2000: 99; Paris, 2005; Poe *et al.*, 2004);
- 2) The pre-literacy skills with which a child begins school impact upon later literacy development (Goldenberg, 2004: 1636; Spira *et al.*, 2005), arguably more than SES does (Adams, 1990; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). Sénéchal's (2006) study shows that literacy skills and phonemic awareness measured at the end of kindergarten/Grade 1 are good predictors of Grade 4 literacy cross linguistically, that is, for French-speaking and English-

speaking children. Similar findings are reported in Storch & Whitehurst (2002), as well as in the work of Denton & West (2002) and West *et al.* (2000), cited in Molfese *et al.* (2006). However, Hannon (2000: 49) takes a more moderate stance and argues that these skills are not crucial factors but indicators of a range of experiences that impact positively on later literacy and educational development;

- 3) Different children enter formal schooling differently prepared to benefit from formal education (Burgess *et al.*, 2002; Raver & Knitzer, 2002). Although there is not yet consensus about how to assess a child's preparedness for kindergarten, children whose language development, phonemic awareness, self control, emotional regulation and social skills are on target are likely to be successful in their first year of school (Aram & Biron, 2004; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991, cited in Jordan *et al.*, 2000; Whitehurst *et al.*, 1999);
- 4) The initial differences with which children start formal schooling often translate into later differences in reading and academic achievement (Adams, 1990; Wagner *et al.*, 1994, 1997, cited in Burgess *et al.*, 2002). Stanovich's (1986, 2004) term 'Matthew Effect' describes the process by which those who know how to read perform better and those with lesser reading ability tend to continuously and cumulatively lag behind in their reading skills (Bast & Reitsma, 1997; Juel, 1988; Lepänen *et al.*, 2004).

As a consequence of EBRR, there has been an increasing shift in focus, in developed countries, from early school years to the years preceding school entry (Makin, 2002). Fox (2001: 112) says that, "the first day of school is almost too late for a child to learn to read. It's as scary as that." This concern for the essential role and impact of literacy experiences on future literacy and educational development is one that I share.

EBBR has implications for education policy. For instance, in the context where there is a pattern of relative stability in literacy development, it seems important to provide opportunities for young children to acquire and develop early literacy skills (Sénéchal, 2006: 82). This gives schools the "responsibility to discover what children already know about writing and reading, and to help them make connections with what we

believe they need to know” (Neuman, 1998: 12). Schools can achieve this by developing and enhancing curricula so as to meet literacy demands in particular contexts (Foorman *et al.*, 1998) and by investing in resources to improve EL experiences. Whitehurst *et al.* (1999: 262) suggest “it might be too late to wait until children begin formal reading instruction to help those at risk of having reading difficulties.” Although I would tend to disagree with the definitive view that “Within EL, the evidence-based reading research has identified the core knowledge and skills young children must develop to become successful readers” (Vukelich & Christie, 2004: 11), the review of the EBRR points towards some of the skills that **can enhance and optimise children’s early literacy development**. Conceding the importance of EL experiences in later literacy and educational development, I start by developing a working description of EL that will inform the rest of this study.

3.4 Deconstructing ‘emergent literacy’

One of the critiques made against early EBRR is that it took a fairly holistic approach to EL (Sénéchal *et al.*, 2001; Sénéchal, 2006: 62), failing to offer a model that makes fine distinctions among its different components (for instance, oral skills and knowledge about print). Quoting a number of studies (Evans *et al.*, 2000; Fritjers *et al.*, 2000; Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000; Sénéchal *et al.*, 1998; Sénéchal & LeFèvre, 2001; Whitehurst *et al.*, 1994), Sénéchal *et al.* (2001) suggest that EL is not a unitary construct and state that it is theoretically and empirically useful to differentiate between the different components of the construct. This view is supported by Gest *et al.* (2004: 320), Jordan *et al.* (2000) and Snow (1983). Sénéchal *et al.* (2001) use the classification systems generated by Mason & Stewart (1990) and Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) to argue that, subsumed under the construct EL, there are different types of activities which affect different aspects of literacy development: for instance, story book reading helps children’s vocabulary development, but not their print knowledge. Acknowledging the complexity of the EL models that have emerged in the literature reviewed, Gest *et al.* (2004), Gough and Tunmer (1986) and Snow (1983) describe EL as consisting of the following components:

1. Print/Decoding Skills**a. Print knowledge****b. The alphabetic principle****c. Phonological/Phonemic awareness****2. Oral skills: Language comprehension.**

Below, I discuss each of the above components separately and their relevance to the present study.

With respect to (1a) Print/Decoding skills: Print knowledge, Adams (1990), Clay (1991) and Levy *et al.* (2006) document the importance of children's exposure to print for the development of **concepts of print** and **attitudes to print**. Dickinson & DeTemple (1998) suggest that environmental print awareness in young children might indicate an early interest in print that could then lead to later analytic orientation.

As for **(1b) Print/Decoding skills: The alphabetic principle**, Perego & Boyle (2005: 171) define the alphabetic principle as "the idea that language sounds are represented by letters and letter sequences." Although the concept has been largely used for native speakers, McBride-Chang & Treiman's (2003) findings attest to the power and utility of alphabetic principle, even for children learning to read English as L2 (see also Levin *et al.* 2002; Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Treiman & Kessler, 2003; Treiman & Rodriguez, 1999; Treiman *et al.*, 2001; Treiman *et al.*, 1994). More than making the relation between symbol and sound, Dickinson & DeTemple (1998: 243, who cite evidence: Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997; Chall, 1967; Mason, 1980; Treiman *et al.*, 1996) and Leppänen *et al.* (2004) state that the ability to identify letters correlates with later reading. Similarly, De Abreu & Cardoso-Martins (1998) have demonstrated the influence of letter names on early attempts at reading and writing. The relationship between recognising letters and reading might be related to the fact that letter names contain the sound that they represent, thus helping children make the letter-sound relation (Share, 2004). That is why

Treiman, Tincoff *et al.* (1998) have proposed the ‘name-to-sound facilitation’ hypothesis. It must, however, be acknowledged that there is a decrease in the strength of correlations between letter knowledge and later reading proficiency, which makes its predictive validity short-lived (Johnston *et al.*, 1996; Muter, 1994; Paris 2005). Since the above discussion indicates the importance of knowing the alphabet at the beginning level of reading for alphabetic writing systems such as English, I propose to use the more inclusive term ‘**familiarity with the alphabet**’ to describe this aspect of print and decoding skills.

When considering **(1c) Print/Decoding skills: Phonological/Phonemic awareness (PA)**, it is important to understand phonological awareness as referring to an understanding of the sound structure of language, that is, that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes and sounds. There are different levels of phonological awareness within words: syllable, onsets and rimes, and sounds. Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness and refers to the knowledge of words at the level of individual sounds. It helps learners to segment, blend and manipulate individual sounds in words. In alphabetic scripts, phonemic awareness facilitates reading because the alphabet is a graphic system that relates letters to speech sounds: as learners learn the relationship between speech sounds and the letters, they gain access to one of the cueing systems in reading - graphophonics (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005: 172). However, spelling-to-sound consistency varies across orthographies, with some languages having more transparent orthographies (Italian, French) than others (English has 26 and more than 200 different ways for the graphemes/grapheme sequences to represent the 44 phonemes). According to Ziegler & Goswami (2005: 14), “small grain size-teaching works especially well in languages with consistent letter-sound correspondences.” In fact, Goswami (2002) argues that children learning to read relatively consistent orthographies develop phonemic awareness more rapidly.

While Adams (1990), Bryant & Goswami (1990), Muter & Snowling (1998) and The National Reading Panel (2000) maintain that phonological awareness positively impacts

on reading achievement and spelling skills, Krashen (2002, 2004b) argues that PA is not essential to literacy development. Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley (1989, cited in Freeman & Freeman, 2003) and Freeman & Freeman (1997, 2000) say that PA can develop without explicit instruction; it is a consequence of reading experience and print exposure rather than a direct causal factor in explaining either decoding or reading comprehension development. On the other hand, McQuillan (1998), Ehri *et al.* (2001) and Taylor *et al.* (2000, cited in Cummins, 2003: 8) argue that there is minimal evidence to support the view that PA training has a significant or long-lasting impact on the development of **reading comprehension**. In terms of testing, Smith (1994) has argued that it is hardly possible to obtain reliable measures of PA at the age of 4, and that at an early age, PA skills are highly associated with more general verbal skills (Leseman & de Jong, 1998).

In the local context, Mauritian children are taught to read English using the look-and-say method, rather than the traditional phonics approach. Hence, to include PA in my working definition of EL appears redundant. This is in line with the view of McBride-Chang & Treiman (2003), who argue that it is difficult to test Hong Kong children's letter-sound knowledge specifically because these children are taught to read English using the look-and-say method (Holm & Dodd, 1996, cited in McBride-Chang & Ho, 2005: 121), rather than by associating letter names and phonemes. Arguably, in such contexts, the letter-phoneme relationship might come at the same time as, or as a result of, learning to read. In fact, Morais *et al.*'s (1979, cited in Perfetti *et al.*, 1995) study of adults acquiring literacy, has suggested that some formal training or experience in an alphabetic orthography is necessary for segmental awareness. Hence, basic literacy achievement both depends on and promotes knowledge of the phonological structure of language. However, such considerations are beyond the scope of the present thesis.

The second component of EL is **(2) Oral skills: Language comprehension**. According to Dickinson *et al.* (2003), Roskos *et al.* (2004:1) and Strickland (2004: 87), oral language is the foundation upon which school literacy is built and oral proficiency continues to play an important role as children learn to read and write. Children who do

not develop strong oral language skills and vocabulary in their early years will find it difficult to keep pace with their peers (Neuman, 2006). In the context where Mauritian children learn to read and write in a FL, the question of oral skills needs to be addressed. In the Ch3.5, I address the following two related sub-questions:

- Is the mismatch between the language of the home and the initial language of literacy a barrier to achieving literacy? (Ch3.5.1)
- What is the role of oral proficiency in SL/FL literacy development? (Ch3.5.2-3.5.3)

3.5 SL/FL literacy

3.5.1 Initial literacy in a language other than the L1 (Ln)

The whole issue of L1 LoL and L1 MoI is grounded in the intuitive belief that the mismatch between a child's home language and the school language will cause problems - the linguistic mismatch hypothesis (Cummins, 2001: 215). Although empirical studies (refer to August & Shanahan, 2006; Garcia & Beltran, 2003; Krashen, 2003a: 57 for reviews) indicate that L1 literacy facilitates L2 literacy, there is also evidence to suggest that L1 literacy is not a **definite** pre-requisite for learning to read a new language (Hedgcock & Atkinson, 1993, cited in Fitzgerald, 2000). In fact, the total credibility of the 'linguistic mismatch hypothesis' has since the 1970s been seriously questioned (Cummins 2001: 215).

Cummins (2000: 215) argues that the initial language of literacy is not, in itself, a determinant of academic outcome. As evidence of this, one can cite the success of various immersion programmes, set up in Canada, USA (Bournot-Trites & Reeder, 2001, cited in Bournot-Trites & Tellowitz, 2002: 3; Cummins, 2001: 97, 121; Lambert & Tucker, 1972) and Australia (de Courcy & Bunston, 2000; Turnbull *et al.*, 2000, cited in Bournot-Trites & Tellowitz, 2002: 3). The success of these programmes indicates that the cognitive development of the students involved in the programmes has not been impeded because of the LoL or the MoI. Research (evidence cited in Garcia, 2000; Verhoeven, 1994) has also shown that children can successfully acquire literacy in another language

and that the language of initial literacy need not necessarily be the child's L1 for the child to be successful academically. Webb (2004), who works on the South African situation, has argued that, in principle, using the L2 as MoI is not an obstacle to the full development of learners' potential and that many South African learners have been successful despite having learnt through the L2. Conversely, there are a number of children, with estimates ranging from 1 or 3% to 10 or 20%, who experience difficulties with literacy even when (1) they are learning to read in their L1, and (2) they live in supportive literacy environments (Stokes, 2000).

Cummins has lately argued that questions of identity and power are intricately linked with the success of L1 literacy. For instance, Cummins (2000: 215; 2001) says that there are benefits to L1 Spanish literacy in the USA because students feel their identity is threatened in a context where English is the dominant and powerful language. The centrality of identity negotiation to the process of (bi)literacy development, which suggests that history might be as important as language as a causal factor in educational under-achievement, brings in a more social aspect to Cummins' earlier work. One must, however, bear in mind the particularity of Cummins' work: it has been primarily carried out among immigrants in a second language situation and findings from such research cannot be instantly generalised across contexts. Each bilingual learning situation is unique and it is unsound to reach overall general conclusions.

What appears to transpire from decades of research is first, whether a programme is bilingual, ESL or structured immersion, what is highly significant is what is being transacted in the interactions between educators and students (Cummins 2000: 49). First, bilingual programmes are not necessarily more 'effective' nor will they necessarily succeed better than alternative programmes; it is the commitment of educational programmes that is crucial and this commitment can be felt through their implementation. Secondly, the outcomes of any programme depend on a variety of implementation factors (Cummins 2000: 209; Cummins, 2001: 171). According to Adams (1990) and Foorman *et al.* (1998, cited in IRA, 1999a), improved teacher training, in-service training, and

favourable school learning climates are essential for the success of literacy and educational programmes.

3.5.2 Ln oral proficiency: the foundations of Ln literacy development?

The main difference between learning to read in an L1 and reading in Ln is oral proficiency (Golderberg, 2004: 1646): while one is necessarily proficient in one's L1, one is not necessarily so in Ln at the outset of formal literacy instruction. In a context like Mauritius where the official MoI and main LoL is an FL, the essential question is: what is the role of oral proficiency in developing FL literacy?

Droop & Verhoeven (2003), Lenters (2004), Roskos *et al.* (2004: 1) and Strickland (2004) argue that reading is founded upon the oral knowledge of the language. For the reason that reading builds on oral proficiency, Ln-speaking children may be expected to experience difficulties in reading. This is probably what led Alderson (1984) to question whether L2 reading is a language problem or a reading problem, or both, suggesting that for low levels of L2/L3 reading, it is a language problem rather than a reading (that is, decoding) problem. In fact, the relationship between oral proficiency and academic achievement is cited as a reason for under-achievement and school dropout among pupils who use a language other than the L1 as the language of learning and teaching (Kasule & Mapolelo, 2005: 612). Various studies (Cziko, 1978, Kahmi-Stein, 1998, Lee & Schallert, 1997, quoted in Constantino, 1999; Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Lenters, 2004; Pang & Kamil, 2004: 3) argue that a lack of proficiency in an L2 is the primary reason for L2 reading difficulties, at least at relatively low levels of L2 competence. Lenters (2004: 30) suggests that:

As the various findings are untangled, a picture emerges of young second-language children successfully learning to read in a new language, provided that they have reached an oral language threshold that enables them to handle the vocabulary of simple texts geared towards young emergent readers.

The relationship between oral proficiency and enhanced literacy development has been pointed out by Snow *et al.* (1998: 237), who claim that “Giving a child initial reading instruction in a language that he or she does not yet speak ... can undermine the child’s chance [to] see literacy as a powerful form of communication, by knocking the support of meaning out from underneath the process of learning” (1998: 237), and August & Shanahan (2006), who say that oral English proficiency is a critical component of reading for second language learners. Geva (1995) suggests that children can be taught to read in their L2 even as they are developing oral language proficiency, making clear the link between oral language proficiency and successful reading. Geva & Zadeh (2006: 52) have found that ESL children, who are efficient readers, have higher oral proficiency in oral English than ESL readers who are less proficient. In fact, they (2006: 33) argue that although L2 oral proficiency may not make a **unique** contribution over and above other basic reading components to accuracy in L2 word recognition and spelling, it is reasonable to expect that it should play a more pronounced role when word and text reading are targeted. It appears that oral proficiency may be even more important for children learning a language with a “deep” orthography (English) than in “shallow” and transparent orthography (Hebrew) (Geva & Siegel, 2000).

The above research findings are consistent with Cummins’ threshold hypothesis (1979b) that predicts that learners need to achieve a certain level of proficiency in the L1 and the L2 in order to take advantage of the benefits of bilingualism. Although the limitation of the threshold hypothesis is that it cannot be defined in absolute terms, it is a theoretical concept that helps explain the development of reading among bilinguals and language learners.

For the purposes of this thesis, the limitations of the research reviewed above are two-fold. First, it has been carried out in L2 situations, and secondly, it has been carried out in developed countries. Hence, the findings of this research might not be transferable across language situations as pointed out by Heugh (2006), who suggests that SLA research (e.g., Doughty & Long, 2003) might be biased in that it has not yet considered

data from African contexts. This is a theoretical question that will need to be addressed empirically. Nonetheless, the studies tend to converge towards the view that oral language proficiency in L_n facilitates literacy development in L_n. The challenge is now to define oral language proficiency.

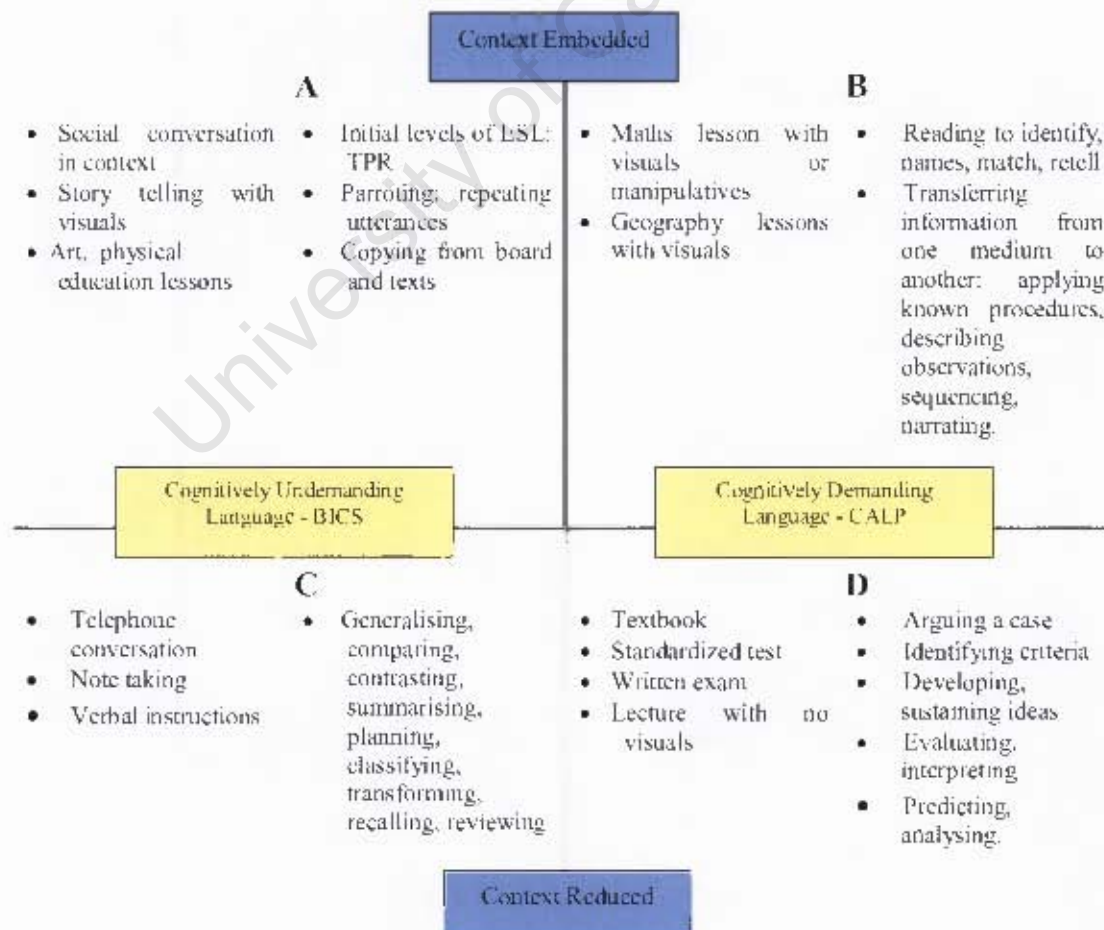
3.5.3 Defining ‘language proficiency’ in context

In language acquisition theory, language proficiency has been conceptualised differently. In his formal approach to language study, Chomsky (1965) makes a distinction between **competence** and **performance**. His seminal work, which revolutionised the way in which language is conceptualised, is the foundation of the generative-grammar school. Extensive empirical research is still carried out on linguistic competence (White, 1989, 2003). Chomsky has, however, been critiqued for implicitly giving precedence to linguistic competence over performance and for not seeing the complexity of the ‘native speaker’ concept by such people as Hymes (1972) and Halliday (1975), who have taken a more functional stance.

Hymes (1972) coined the term ‘communicative competence’ to contrast with Chomsky’s ‘syntactic/linguistic competence’ because he argues that language is undeniably a social phenomenon. Canale & Swain (1980) have refined the notion of ‘communicative competence’ by dividing it into sub-competencies (grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence). Verhoeven and Vermeer (1992: 172) have even proposed a model along the same lines. In the context of the growing use of English as an international language, Nunn (2007) has proposed to redefine the concept for international and local communities.

Taking a more pedagogical approach and drawing on the experience of immigrants in the Canadian context, Cummins (1979a) differentiates between **BICS** (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills refers to the cognitively undemanding manifestation of language proficiency in interpersonal situations, which is achieved in an individual’s L1, regardless of this individual’s IQ or academic aptitude) and **CALP** (Cognitive/Academic Language

Proficiency is the ability to manipulate language in decontextualised academic contexts). These concepts have been critiqued for being dichotic and static, for ignoring the social context where they are used, for their inability to operationalise the terms in research studies, and for being nothing more than test-wiseness (Edelsky, 1996; Wiley, 1996). Cummins (2000: 86-111) has responded to the critiques and has refined the terms: CALP is decontextualised and cognitively demanding (hard to understand) language, and BICS is contextualised, cognitively undemanding language, picked up through familiar interaction, gestures and tone of voice. In his *Model of Academic Language*, Cummins (2005b) says that tasks "range in difficulty along one continuum from cognitively undemanding to cognitively demanding; and along the other continuum from context-embedded to context reduced." The diagram illustrates Cummins' model; it also maps cognitive processes onto the model (Abel, 2006, p.c.).



In spite of this fine distinction, Aukerman (2007: 630) writes: “If academic language is inevitably social, and everyday language is cognitively demanding, then the BICS/CALP distinction seems decidedly fragile.” Despite the critiques aimed at Cummins, I believe that the distinction between BICS and CALP is significant in postcolonial foreign language situations, where language proficiency is sought for in order to access education, rather than for communicative purposes.

What emerges from the above discussion is that the various definitions of language proficiency reveal the theoretical standpoints from which they emanate, as well as mirror the historical and geographical sites from which they emerge. Hence, the term is subject to semantic development and its semantic value is defined in relation to the context in which it is utilised. In her work on bilingualism, Bialystok (2001: 18) proposes that in contexts where there is no defined norm or criterion, ‘language proficiency’ must be defined *in situ* (supported by Harley *et al.*, 1990:7):

Language proficiency is the ability to function in a situation that is defined by specific cognitive and linguistic demands, to a level of performance indicated by either objective criteria or normative standards... This sets out two agendas for assessment. The first is to establish criterion-referenced achievements that provide a guideline by which we can assess the proficiency of language learners. The second is to embed these descriptions into a context that is sensitive to age, proficiency level of the learner, and the linguistic functions they are required to carry out. This embedded inventory is the norm-reference protocol.

Since ‘language proficiency’ has been largely defined in Euro-American contexts, it tends to have been conceptualised in terms of language as a means of communication and social integration, as well as a vehicle for education. However, the present research has taken shape outside this Euro-American context, in a context where (1) the FL is taught in the school context, (2) learners are assessed in comprehension, reading and writing in Standard (British) English, throughout primary schooling, and (3) learners are formally assessed in oral communicative competence only when they reach the fifth year of secondary education. As a result of these particularities of the local context, the whole issue of writing grammatically correct English is a robust reality in Mauritius, as it is in

many postcolonial contexts where English is predominantly the written medium of development (business, trade, technology, knowledge). Conversely, being able to speak English and being fluent in English are perceived as being less important locally because English is very rarely used as language of oral communication in the local context.

Cummins (2000: 123) says that “the way [in which] we conceptualise language proficiency will exert a profound impact both on how we assess and attempt to develop proficiency among learners.” Mauritius is an example of a case where I would argue the reverse has taken place: the assessment has had a washback effect on the way in which language proficiency is conceptualised locally. In the exam-oriented culture that characterises the Mauritian education system (Ch2.4.3), it is the assessment (the CPE exam, the Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate exams) that has given specific meaning to ‘language proficiency’ in the local context. Given the nature of the CPE exam, which is a written test assessing comprehension (vocabulary, grammar), and reading and writing skills in Standard (British) English, the local context has subtly relegated oral and speaking skills to a secondary position in the taught curriculum. It is only in lower secondary school that learners and teachers put emphasis on oral communicative skills, in view of the Cambridge School Certificate oral English exam. The assessment has also shaped language teaching approaches and methods. In sum, I would argue that the local assessment methods have determined the meaning of ‘language proficiency’ at primary and lower secondary levels in Mauritius to be the ability to read and write Standard (British) English.

3.6 Language teaching

3.6.1 Language teaching methods

A review of language teaching methods can be found in Celce-Murcia (2001) and Richard & Rodgers (1986). Much of this literature deals with adult SL learners, and does not differentiate between SL and FL teaching. This is probably related to the fact that the ELT business thrived on immigration in a post-World War 2 context. Some

materials on SL teaching methods for children have recently been produced (Ashworth & Wakefield, 2004; Curtain & Pesola, 1994).

I will here briefly discuss three main teaching methodologies: Audiolingualism (because of its popularity in many African contexts), TPR (because of its appropriateness for young beginners), and the communicative language teaching approach (because of its recent and growing popularity).

Although out of fashion in many European countries, **audiolingualism** still has a pervasive influence on many classrooms in developing countries, such as Africa, where languages are taught mostly in formal classroom situations. The reasons for the survival of this language teaching approach might have to do with (1) teachers' lack of communicative competence in the language being taught, (2) the culture of teaching where the teacher is seen as the provider and transmitter of knowledge and the learner as the passive recipient, and (3) the fact that this approach makes less demands on the teacher. Hence, in some contexts, teachers still control classrooms, through "listen and repeat" activities, practice, repetition, drills, and immediate verbal production. Influenced by behaviorism, which conceives of language learning as habit formation, and being memory-oriented, it has come under serious attack with the advent of Chomsky's revolutionary theory of language learning.

Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1967) draws on the work of Piaget to argue that the child language learner acquires language through motor movement: game-like movements put the learner in the mood for language learning. Built around the coordination of speech and action, TPR elicits physical actions and activity on the part of the learners, who are listeners and performers. TPR is a comprehension-driven approach to language teaching, it provides comprehensible input and uses visual scaffolds as a means to making input more meaningful, without expecting learners to participate in interactions until they are ready and willing to do so. TPR has been found to be particularly effective and appropriate with young language learners (Garcia, 2001; Islam,

2003; Phillips, 1993; Wolfe & Jones, 1982). The critiques of TPR are that it uses mostly the imperative mood, it focuses on short phrases or single word items, it is effective only for the early stages of SL learning, and it fosters mainly passive language skills.

The basic principles underlying **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** are that language is communication (Hymes, 1972), that language has certain functions (Halliday, 1975), and that language teaching has to be learner-centred. Despite its growing popularity, this approach has been critiqued because it assumes that the teacher is a competent (linguistically, communicatively and discursively) and proficient speaker of English. However, this is not always the case in countries where English is a foreign language, and in a sector like pre-primary education, where preschool teachers are not necessarily those who are the best academically and linguistically qualified. The premise of CLT, that communication is at the centre of the language learning process, is also at odds with Krashen's input hypothesis, which emphasises the importance of input rather than interaction and output. Krashen (1998) claims that while comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition, output and interaction might help, but not essential (this is consistent with Chomsky's assumptions about linguistic competence).³⁸ CLT has also been critiqued for being culturally inappropriate in Asian contexts (Collins, 1999; Critchley, 2004; Ellis, 1996; Tan, 2005): Asians view teachers as the bearers of knowledge and students as passive recipients, while CLT pushes forward learner-centred teaching and learner-autonomy in the classroom. Tickoo (2006: 174) says that language teaching methods in Asia have been influenced by shifts in English language teaching in English-speaking countries, but this has been characterised by a failure to grasp the differences in educational settings; for instance, an inability to understand established learning styles and strategies by learners and a failure to value Asian society's attitudes to and expectations from teachers and teaching.

While the above language teaching methodologies are used in both SL and FL contexts, Cook (2001: 13) finds it important to distinguish between SL teaching (which takes place

³⁸ The development of content-based instruction is in line with Krashen's input hypothesis

in a country where the L2 is widely used) and FL teaching (which takes place in a country where the language is not used socially). However, he brings attention to the fact that this convenient distinction is an over-simplification and does not necessarily entail that learners in the two situations learn in different ways. The mainstream EFL teaching style, described in Cook (2001: 224-228) and Harmer (2001), emphasises knowledge of language rather than communicative ability. For instance, in EFL classes, techniques of grammatical explanation are combined with practice in what has become known as the PPP (Present, Practice, Produce). This modest literature on EFL teaching has been supplemented by a range of publications focusing on foreign/modern language teaching methods for young children (Argondizzo, 1992; Cameron, 2001; Driscoll & Frost, 1999; Dunn, 1994: 28-33; Johnstone, 1999; Phillips, 1993; Rumley, 1999; Satchwell, 1999; Scott & Ytreberg, 1990) because of the growing number of children studying modern foreign languages in countries like the UK (Driscoll, 1999). Some of the salient features of child FL learners, as described in this literature, are a silent period, an intuitive grasp of language structures, a sensitive phonological system, less anxiety and more motivation, more time for a planned syllabus that should use scaffolding, and an interest in games and songs. In order for FL teaching to be a successful experience, in-service training (Muir, 1999; Sharpe, 1999) and support for teachers are essential.

The critique of the literature on modern/foreign language teaching is that it has, to date, focused on children learning an FL, which does not have the cachet that English has in developed countries. For these children, the success of their FL learning experience does not determine their educational development or academic performance, as it does for children who need to learn a FL (English) for their educational, social and professional development.

3.6.2 Comprehensible input

Whatever approach is taken when teaching second and foreign languages, **linguistic input** is fundamental. Krashen (1982, 1985) has proposed the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, renamed the Comprehension Hypothesis (henceforth, CH) (Krashen,

2004b),³⁹ which conceives that language learning and language acquisition are driven by comprehensible input. CH predicts that if the message, that is the input, is understood, and if there is enough of it, language learners will acquire the necessary grammar, given that they are ready to acquire it (Natural Order Hypothesis) and if they are in the right mindset for it (Affective Filter Hypothesis). One interesting idea within Krashen's CH is that "input must consist of 'i+1'" (Krashen, 1982: 21). This concept predicts that learners must hear something that is slightly beyond their level in order for them to progress in their language development.

The vitality of Krashen's CH is seen in the extension of the theory of language acquisition to include literacy (Krashen, 2004b), and in the introduction of new concepts such as "Narrow Reading", which follows from the concept of narrow listening (listening to various materials dealing with the same topic) and which implies reading various works of the same author (Dupuy, 1999; Krashen, 1996b, 2004b; Rodrigo & Krashen, 1996). Krashen's CH has also been used as a basis for a number of empirical studies, for instance, book flood projects in a number of countries such as Singapore, Sri Lanka and the Fiji (Constantino *et al.*, 1997; Elley, 1991, 2001; Elley & Manghubai, 1983; Krashen, 1988, 1993; Lee, *et al.*, 1996; Manghubai, 2001; Mason & Krashen, 1997; McQuillan, 1998; Ng & Sullivan, 2001; Schollar, 2001; Stokes, Krashen & Kartchner, 1998). Book floods have shown the power of reading in promoting SL/FL proficiency. According to Krashen, reading provides new input (i+1), in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Postlethwaite & Ross (1992, cited in Cummins, 2003: 19) have also shown that the amount of time students spent in voluntary reading is the second strongest predictor of overall reading achievement.

³⁹ It appears that the term 'Comprehension Hypothesis' illustrates the process by which language proficiency develops more accurately than the term 'Comprehensible Input Hypothesis', because the former term emphasises the recipient of the language input (the language learner) rather than the provider of the language input. The former term thus makes the implicit assumption that acquisition is impossible without the learner being receptive to the comprehensible input being provided. This corresponds to Krashen's claim that although comprehension is a necessary condition for language acquisition, it is not a sufficient condition for language acquisition, hence pointing to other factors that might affect successful language acquisition.

The CH has, however, been critiqued on a number of fronts,⁴⁰ one among them aimed at the 'i+1' concept as being vague and lacking clarity. However, the notion that **scaffolding** is needed for the development of proficiency in SLA/FLA can find its equivalent in Vygotsky's work. Given that Krashen's concept of 'i+1' is not unfamiliar to research in other fields, this gives his own conceptualisation more strength. In any case, I would argue that the operationalisation of such terms can only be done in specific contexts, by taking into account the various and differing variables relevant to these same contexts and situations.

Apart from being critiqued, CH has also been rivalled (Krashen, 2002). Swain (1985) proposed the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (COH), claiming that comprehensible input is necessary for L2 learners but that the learners also need to speak and write. Krashen (1998) has, in turn, critiqued the COH, showing that output is surprisingly rare (Krashen, 1994; Pica, 1988) and arguing that a number of studies show learners' development of language and literacy competence without any language production at all.

In spite of criticism and rivalry, Krashen's CH has contributed to illuminate researchers and guide teachers on the importance of providing input that is (1) comprehensible, (2) at the learner's level, and (3) built upon.

3.6.3 Approaches to literacy instruction

Since language teaching includes the teaching of oral skills, as well as the teaching of reading and writing, it is important to briefly consider the main approaches to literacy instruction here. Numerous approaches to literacy instruction have appeared over the years, and they can be divided into two broad categories (Ediger, 2001: 154): **bottom-up approaches** to literacy instruction and **top-down approaches** to literacy instruction.

⁴⁰ Gregg (1984) has rejected the Acquisition vs. Learning Hypothesis, arguing that there is no need to conceptualise language learning in two different ways (refer to Aukerman's (2007) critique of the BICS/CALP distinction in Ch3.5.3); McLaughlin (1987) has claimed that Krashen's terms are poorly defined and that his conclusions are without proof; and Ellis (1985: 229-234) has critiqued this "non-interface" position, arguing that children and adults benefit from formal instruction.

The **bottom-up approaches** to literacy instruction view reading instruction as moving from learning parts and building up to the whole. Such approaches include phonics approaches (teaching children the sound-letter relationships), linguistic approaches (exposing children to selected words containing regular spelling patterns, such as *take-bake-lake-cake*), sight word approaches (also known as the look-say method, where children are taught to recognize whole words, through the use of flash cards) and a basal reader approach (a technique where basal readers are prepared in such a way that there is a grading in the materials: the *Ladybird* collection, 'Peter & Jane', is a common reading scheme following that approach). The limitation of this approach to literacy instruction is that it emphasises the skills that underlie reading, sometimes at the expense of developing reading as a participatory social constructive activity.

The **top-down approaches** to literacy instruction emphasise the "overall construction of meaning from connected or whole texts." Such approaches are based on the assumption that reading must be meaningful and that reading should be developed in real communicative situations. The Language Experience Approach (Wurr, 2002) is one such approach where children create their own texts, and these texts are the used to teach children how to read. Dixon & Nessel (1983: ix-x, cited in Wurr, 2002) suggest that the basic language experience approach procedure is simple: it consists of the teacher and learner discussing a topic, the learner dictates a text to the teacher, the learner reads the text several times, individual words are learnt, the learner reads other author-materials.

The history of literacy education indicates the quest for a literacy instructional approach that will solve the problem of illiteracy. The choice of approach to literacy instruction has been influenced by fashionable trends in literacy instruction and political decisions within countries. In Britain and the US, the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by the whole-language, meaning-based movement. However, with the falling standards of literacy, there is now a return to traditional synthetic phonics. The American *No Child Left Behind* legislation has voiced out its commitment to improving literacy by emphasising a bottom-up or phonics approach, while the British *National Literacy*

Strategy has included 5 hours a week of direct teaching of literacy with an emphasis on the teaching of phonics at the early stages of literacy instruction (Riley, 2001: 37). This pendulum swing between approaches to literacy instruction must, however, be read cautiously in the light of Bond & Dykstra's (1967/1997) research which compared several methods of teaching children how to read and which concluded that no single method is superior to the other. Moreover, recent research indicates that other than instructional approaches to literacy, the orthographic consistency of discrete languages seriously impacts on the rate and strategy of reading (Ellis *et al.*, 2005, Goswami, 2005). According to Ziegler and Goswami (2005), while Finnish children begin school at 7 and can read with 90% accuracy by approximately the 10th week of school, English children have a slower average rate of learning to read in English. Ziegler and Goswami (2005) thus suggest that small grain size teaching works less well in a language with less consistent letter-sound correspondences, such as English, than in a language with consistent letter-sound correspondences like Italian. It thus appears important to consider the internal structure of languages when searching for appropriate literacy instruction approaches.

The above discussion shows that one of the highlights of the history of literacy is the great Phonics vs. Whole language approach debate, which has led some to take a 'balanced approach' (Ediger, 2001: 158; Wray, 1997). However, Street (2003b: 78) warns us against the use of this term as he argues that "some recent balanced approaches [...] may not be quite as evenhanded as the terms suggests." For Street, this 'balanced approach' has tended to represent the dominant discourse in current policy document, which (1) claims that research gives precedence to phonics, and (2) holds the whole language movement of the 1970s and 1980s responsible for the falling literacy standards. Personally, I believe that apart from approaches to literacy instruction, it is essential to remain sensitive to particular contexts and to acknowledge that not all approaches will work equally well in all contexts. If I take Mauritius as an example, one distinct aspect of the bottom-up approach is favoured: the sight word approach or the look-say method is used and children are taught to recognize whole words, through the use of textbooks

and cards. Since Mauritian learners of English are learning to read in a language they are not familiar with and in a language that is not used in their environment, this approach seems to be the most appropriate in the context. The phonics approach would seem unsuitable in the local context: Verhoeven (1994) argues that children who do not know the meaning of words will experience phonic mediation as a meaningless rote procedure.

Despite various approaches to literacy instruction, Strickland (1998) says that there is general agreement on the fact that literacy is important, that people read and write for meaning and that the alphabetic code is essential in literacy development.

3.6.4 The role of the curriculum

The curriculum often determines language and literacy teaching in terms of the contents and the approach. Olivia (2001: 12) describes the curriculum as a “construct or concept, a verbalization of an extremely complex idea, or set of ideas.” The definition of the term ‘curriculum’ is as multiple as the theorists, researchers and practitioners having written about curriculum theory and curriculum development. Moreover, the definition of ‘curriculum’ varies from a very broad one, where curriculum is viewed as a person’s life experiences to a more restricted one, where curriculum is defined “as a plan for action or a written document that includes strategies for achieving desired goals” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004: 10). This variety shows the dynamism, rather than the confusion in the field.

Since this thesis focuses on the classroom, I will use Marsh & Willis’s view of the curriculum as “all the experiences in the classroom which are planned and enacted” (2003: 4). Within the wealth of the literature on curriculum theory and development, a few essential principles emerge:

- 1) A curriculum formalises the area and context in which it is introduced, it determines “what knowledge, skills, and values students should be provided with to bring about intended outcomes, and how teaching and learning in schools or educational systems can be planned, measured and evaluated” (Richards, 2001: 2);

- 2) A curriculum is a “political intervention in education [...] based on the assumption that changes in the quality of teaching and learning, and the outcomes of schooling, can be brought about by a legislated curriculum which defines an entitlement to education, and specifies what forms of knowledge are considered to be worthwhile in social, cultural and economic terms” (Wood, 2004: 363);
- 3) Curriculum-development is a decision-making process: choices among disciplines and competing viewpoints, choices of emphases and methods, choices in organisations (Olivia, 2001: 28);
- 4) Since curricula are socially constructed events and texts, which are “created by people within temporal, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004: 62, view shared by Clark, 1987: xii), they should be contextually understood and interpreted;
- 5) There are different types of curricula operating. Patterson (1995, cited in Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2001: 307) uses the dichotomy *enacted* and *delivered curriculum*. The TIMSS-1999 report uses the IEA three-level concept of curriculum to assess the learning outcomes in a number of countries: the *intended curriculum* (transmitted by national authorities), the *implemented curriculum* (interpreted and translated by teachers) and the *attained curriculum* (what is manifested in learners’ achievements and attitudes). Glatthorn (2000) makes even finer distinctions in his conceptualisation of the curriculum: the *recommended curriculum* (what is delineated by scholars and professional organisations), the *written curriculum* (the documents appearing in schools and state documents), the *taught curriculum* (what teachers attempt to implement), the *supported curriculum* (the resources that support and help implement the curriculum), the *assessed curriculum* (that which is tested and evaluated), the *learned curriculum* (what students actually learn) and the *hidden curriculum* (the unintended curriculum). The above can be synthesised in such terms:
 - **The intended curriculum:** the guidelines provided by the official national documents;
 - **The taught curriculum:** what teachers teach in classes;
 - **The attained curriculum:** what learners learn;

- **The hidden curriculum:** the unintended curriculum or the parallel curriculum. Pennington (1989: 178) says that the “hidden curriculum is transmitted to learners through disparities between what is said and what is done.” She argues that teachers are often unaware of the covert messages that they transmit, verbally or non-verbally. The use of the term “hidden” seems problematical as it implies conscious hiding on the part of the education system or the stakeholders involved in the system.

Research has suggested that curriculum implementation does not always and necessarily follow the predictable path of formulation – adoption – implementation – reformulation. There can a number of factors that can explain the observed discontinuity between written policy documents and classroom practices. Some of these factors are material: referring to the South African RNCS (2002), Chisholm & Leyendecker (2007) argue that there have been some implementation problems caused by the lack of resources and capacity. Other factors are socio-educational: talking of Hong Kong’s target-oriented curriculum, Carless (2000: 264) refers to teacher attitudes, teacher training, teachers’ understanding of the innovation as possible factors impeding curriculum implementation. He emphasises the importance of teacher values, practices and beliefs in any curriculum innovation and reform. According to Chisholm & Leyendecker (2007), the examination of existing practices should be the starting point when embarking on any curriculum reform.

3.7 Contextualising EL development

In this sub-section, I will consider the literature that looks at the context of emergent literacy experiences. Since the home and the preschool are the main locations where EL develops (Aram & Levin, 2001; Weigel *et al.*, 2005), I discuss the literature on the potential impact of the home and preschool environment on children’s EL. I start with the home because of the rich literature on this topic.

3.7.1 The home environment

Researchers (Bissex, 1980; Foster *et al.*; 2005; Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Strickland & Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988) argue convincingly that children first encounter language and literacy in their homes: “Learning begins at birth and parents have been called children’s first teachers” (Britto *et al.*, 2006: 68). That might explain why Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2006: 261) and McGee & Morrow (2005) use the concept ‘family literacy’ to describe the ways in which people learn and use literacy in their homes and community lives. Hence, the Home Environment (HE) has become a major focus of inquiry in the area of human development over the past four decades (Trivette, 2004). Much of the research on the role and impact of the home environment on the development of early literacy behaviours amongst children has been carried out in developed, middle-class SES (socio-economic status), white, American literate societies (most of those cited in this chapter). However, a few studies have also been carried out in low SES American communities (Bowey, 1995; Clements *et al.*, 2004; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; McCormick & Mason, 1986, cited in Aram & Biron, 2004; Foster *et al.*, 2005), in low SES Israeli communities (Aram & Biron, 2004; Aram & Levin, 2001; Korat *et al.*, 2003; Levin *et al.*, 2001, 2002), and among immigrants in the Netherlands (de Jong & Leseman, 2001). I, therefore, find justifiable to use this research-base as a starting point for my own preliminary investigation of the influence of the HE on children’s EL development in Mauritius.

Some researchers who have conceptualised HLE are:

- 1) Snow *et al.* (1998) who conceptualise HLE as consisting of 4 key components: the value placed on literacy, the press for achievement, the availability and use of reading materials, parent-child book-reading (cited in Hammer *et al.*, 2003);
- 2) Sénéchal *et al.* (1998) who refer to the binaries: implicit/informal and explicit/formal instruction taking place in the HLE;
- 3) Leseman & de Jong (1998), who propose that HLE contains various facets, consisting of literacy opportunities, instruction, cooperation and social-emotional quality.

Burgess *et al.* (2002) and Weigel *et al.* (2005) have proposed a description of Home Literacy Environment (HLE), which tries to capture its complexity and multifaceted nature.

Table 7: Conceptualising HLE

Burgess <i>et al.</i> (2002)		Weigel <i>et al.</i> (2005)	
Construct	Definition	Construct	Definition
Limiting environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' ability and disposition to provide literacy opportunities to children as determined by the resources: social class, intelligence, reading ability, attitude towards education. 	Parental demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to Burgess <i>et al.</i> (2002) Limiting Environment
Literacy interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' participation in activities that serve to expose children to literacy activities, e.g., shared reading. Parents' view of the importance of literacy, e.g., own leisure reading 		
Passive HLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indirect learning. Activities that expose children to models of literacy usage 	Parental literacy habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to Burgess <i>et al.</i> (2002) Passive HLE. Includes parents' reading behaviours
Active HLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to engage children in activities designed to foster literacy or language development 	Parental activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to Burgess <i>et al.</i> (2002) Active HLE
Shared reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most commonly used measure and conceptualisation of HLE 		
		Parental reading belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The types of beliefs and attitudes parents hold about children's literacy and language development

My critiques of the models of Burgess *et al.* (2002) and Weigel *et al.* (2005) are that:

- 1) They both exclude **Parental expectations**, downplaying what parents expect the school's contribution and their own contribution to be in their children's literacy development;

2) In the Burgess *et al.* (2002) model:

- There is some overlapping between the sub-constructs, **Literacy interface** and **Passive HLE**, as they are described;
- The **Shared reading** activity is subsumed under **Literacy interface**, and appears again as a separate sub-construct;

3) In the Weigel *et al.* (2005) model:

- The **Parental activities** sub-category includes both direct- and indirect-instruction activities, which are distinct types of activities.

Although I admit that the elements are interrelated, a model should conceptualise aspects and factors differently for the sake of convenience and clarity.

Drawing upon the critique of the above models, I will now describe, discuss, and provide the empirical data that underlies the components of HLE that I will use to collect data from the parents whose children are involved in my study.

3.7.1.1 Parental demographics

The various aspects of parental demographics, which influence their literacy practices and which have been mentioned in the empirical literature are: **household income** (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000, cited in Weigel *et al.*, 2005), **parental education** (Christian *et al.*, 1998, Entwistle & Alexander, 1996, cited in Bennett *et al.*, 2002: 297), and **parental occupation** (Leseman, 1994, cited in Leseman & de Jong, 1998). While the economic status of families can vary from year to year, parents' education and occupation is a more stable measure of family environment (McLoyd, 1998, cited in Forster *et al.*, 2005), making the latter two more reliable variables to consider. Various studies measure the impact of parental demographics on children's literacy development: Aram & Levin (2001: 835) measure parental education, vocation and occupation, Gest *et al.* (2004: 323) measure parental education, and Ortiz *et al.* (2001: 267) measure parental education and family income.

3.7.1.2 Parents' literacy habits

Leseman & de Jong (1998) argue that the home environment provides possibilities for interactions with literacy, through (1) the availability of environmental print such as books, and (2) parents' own reading that serves to model of literacy use (Aram & Levin, 2001; Farver *et al.*, 2006; Swalander & Taube, 2007). Parents' literacy habits potentially affect children's EL and later independent reading.

3.7.1.3 Parents' activities: Direct instruction

Parents apparently engage in a number of activities, which have an impact on the children's knowledge of letter names and sounds (Evans *et al.*, 2000, as cited in Sénéchal, 2006) and vocabulary. Haney & Hill (2004) mention that parents often engage in the direct instruction of literacy skills, through a number of activities. For instance, Anbar (1986) and Kraft *et al.* (2001) found that parents help their children learn letter names, play letter games and read alphabet books, while Jackson *et al.* (1988) found that 95% of precocious readers had parents who had identified letter-sounds for their children. Baker *et al.* (1994) and Goldenberger *et al.* (1992) report that low-income (Hispanic) parents emphasise letter naming and spelling sound correspondences when trying to help their children. Dale *et al.* (1995, cited in Sénéchal *et al.*, 1998; Fritjers *et al.*, 2000) say that some parents teach their children vocabulary, or to read and write and this is instrumental in their children's development of reading ability.

3.7.1.4 Parents' activities: Indirect instruction

Reading, "an intensely social activity, [which] provides an interactive context for children to acquire and practise developing verbal and conceptual skills" (Neuman, 1996), is one of the most researched activities in the literature on EL. A number of studies (Bus *et al.*, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1984) have suggested that access to books and shared reading experiences are especially important in children's early literacy development. While early studies (cited in Mikulecky, 1996) have reported strong correlations between parents reading to/with children and the children's later success with literacy, more recent research has looked more specifically at (1) the frequency of

literacy interactions and (2) quality of the conversations accompanying book reading. Dickinson & DeTemple (1998) and Jordan *et al.* (2000) have shown that book reading provides the contexts for the acquisition of new vocabulary (from the books, as well as quality of conversations closely connected with shared reading), while Sénéchal *et al.* (1998) have found that storybook exposure accounts for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in kindergarten and Grade1 children's oral skills, but not their written skills. In fact, compared with book reading, conversations and popular television shows do not contain sufficiently rich vocabulary to allow for much language growth (Hayes, 1988: 584, cited in Anderson, 1996: 64).

3.7.1.5 Parents' beliefs and expectations

Aunola *et al.* (2002: 314, cite research such as Goodnow, 1988; and Musun-Miller & Blevins-Knabe, 1998) claim that parental beliefs play an important role in children's school performance and academic socialisation. Sonnenschein *et al.* (1996) found that parents' positive beliefs and high expectations about their offspring's competencies and school abilities are associated with children's high achievement at school. It has also been suggested that parents' literacy beliefs about and attitudes to reading are related to their literacy behaviours (Weigel *et al.*, 2006): parents with more holistic beliefs engage in more encouragement activities than parents with more skills-based beliefs (Lynch *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, families potentially influence children's reading motivation (Baker *et al.*, 1997). However, it has been found that parents' beliefs and expectations about academic skills vary across linguistic groups (Louvete-Schmauss & Prêteur, 1993, cited in Sénéchal, 2006). Although some of the above-cited research considers parents of children attending primary education, it is possible to suggest that parental beliefs and expectations are present very early in children's lives, and they can be context-specific.

I have utilised the term **parent** throughout sub-section Ch3.7.1 because much has been written about the interaction between parent and child for language development and most studies assume that adult language input at home comes from the parents. However, Chan & McBride-Chan (2005) cautions against this simple equation as they

suggest that it is possible in certain communities to have non-parental caregivers who provide the experience with language and literacy, as the domestic helpers do in Hong Kong (Chan & McBride-Chang, 2005).

3.7.2 The preschool

Apart from the home, the preschool is the other environment, where children can be expected to develop EL skills. In fact, the position statement of the IRA on *Literacy Development in the Preschool Years* is that “High-quality preschools embrace appropriate early literacy experiences delivered by well-prepared, knowledgeable, caring preschool teachers. High-quality preschools can ensure that all children are prepared for school and are developing literacy skills” (IRA, 2005).

Compared with the research on HLE, there is relatively less research on the development of EL skills in the preschool classroom. Some of the studies on the role of the preschool on later literacy and academic development are Crone & Whitehurst (1999), Gest *et al.* (2004, who cite Wasik & Bond, 2001; Dickinson & Sprague, 2001), Neuman & Celano, (2004); Weigel *et al.* (2005) and Whitehurst *et al.* (1999). The reviewed research points that the quality of reading and writing environment of child care centres predicts a significant portion of variance in children’s language skills (Dunn *et al.*, 1994, cited in Weigel *et al.*, 2005), that the number of months spent in child care predicts letter recognition skills among all children (Christian *et al.*, 1998: 516). Interestingly, the books on childhood education (Durkin, 2004; Gunning, 2004; Henninger, 2002; Jalongo, 2003; McGee & Richgels, 2004; Petersen, 2003; Searfoss *et al.*, 2001; Soderman *et al.*, 1999; Vukelich *et al.*, 2002), the joint position statement International Reading Association (IRA)/National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1998), as well as the National Early Literacy Panel (Strickland & Shanahan, 2004), contain information about desirable literacy practices, within the EL framework.

Based on the belief that the preschool has a role to play in facilitating and optimising disadvantaged children’s entrance into primary education, intervention programmes have

been set up, especially for low-income families (Whitehurst *et al.*, 1994, cited in Weigel *et al.*, 2005; Neuman, 1998). Snow *et al.* (1998) argue that children from low-income families are more dependent on school experiences for their academic literacy development than are middle class children. This places the responsibility on schools to provide these children with enriched literacy experiences (McDonald Connor *et al.*, 2005: 370). *Head Start* is an example of such an intervention programme.

Weigel *et al.* (2005) have focused on the influence of the home and the preschool on children's EL. With regards to the preschool classroom, they have proposed a model, which conceptualises **Teacher demographics**, **Teacher literacy habits**, **Teachers' activities** and **Teachers' reading beliefs** as being four components affecting the literacy experiences in the preschool classroom, and which find support in the empirical research. I propose to adapt Weigel's model to include the preschool curriculum as a potential factor bearing on children's emergent literacy experiences. The elements I will consider in the present study are described below.

3.7.2.1 The preschool curriculum

The early childhood curriculum became a reality only recently as a result of an increasing interest in the 1950s and 1960s in the importance of the early years in the child's development, through the work of psychologists and educators as Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Lev Vygotsky. Wortham (2002) gives a history of early childhood curriculum practices, pointing out that while the 1930s - 40s emphasised a child-centred approach, with the work of John Dewey, the 1980s saw a return to more traditional methods of teaching in the US, to culminate in the 1980s - 90s in the teaching of basic skills to prepare children for elementary schools and required standardized tests. In reaction, early childhood specialists put forward the importance of Developmentally Appropriate Practices and curricula, which in turn were critiqued for being too focused on white middle-class children.

According to Bracken & Fischel (2006: 417), recent investigations into early childhood programmes suggest that curricular content is likely to be of great importance for the cognitive development of preschool children and their preparation for primary school. In the context of the recent work by the National Early Literacy Panel (2004) in the US, which has provided data on the skills that predict children's later success in learning to read, and in the context of a return to the 'phonics' approach to literacy instruction to be used as from the kindergarten level, certain states have written documents such as *Head Start Child Outcomes* framework, the role of which is to set early learning standards (Scott-Little *et al.*, 2006: 165, 167). Similarly, in England, the preschool phase has become the target for policy changes because of the diversity of provision and quality of provision, and in learning outcomes (Wood, 2004: 362). England has followed the international trend of structuring the preschool curriculum, as well as the trend towards using the phonics approach to early literacy instruction. This is seen in the curriculum for Reception Year in the 1998 *Primary National Literacy Strategy*, which includes a 'Literacy Hour' (Crawford, 2003: 74). This has led to (1) effective learning time (Riley, 2001: 37) in the form of 5 hours a week of **direct teaching of literacy**, which was not the case before the inception of the NLS (Stainthorp, 2002: 479), (2) a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy encompassing content and pedagogy (Hurd *et al.*, 2006; Riley, 2001: 32), and (3) measurable outcomes. This swing a skills-based approach to literacy instruction has been seriously critiqued, however, on the principle that it treats literacy as "apolitical, acultural and universal" (Grant *et al.*, 2007: 605). In practical terms, Wyse (2000, 2003) has questioned the effectiveness of teaching phonics to 9 year-olds and the theoretical rationale for categorising teaching at word, sentence and text, while Campbell (1998) and Fisher (2004) have argued that although children are taught to read, they are not encouraged to read, as evidenced by the low and declining expenditure on books (Hurd *et al.*, 2006: 85). In terms of the results brought about by curriculum innovation, Earl *et al.* (2001) have argued that the rise in literacy levels could be a result of teaching to the test. On the other hand, Tymms (2004) has questioned the extent to which curricular innovation has impacted on students' performance, while

Tymms & Merrell (2007) have shown that reading attainment has only slightly improved and attitudes to reading have declined.

3.7.2.2 Teacher demographics

Lee (2001: 13-14) points out the centrality of the teacher in the classroom. Some of the factors impacting on programme quality are: teacher's education, age, literacy level, educational experiences (Weigel *et al.*, 2005), and professional background (Abbott-Shim *et al.*, 2000: 117-118; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; McDonald Connor *et al.*, 2005). Jackson *et al.* (2006: 2) argue that it is essential for early childhood educators to possess the expertise and knowledge to plan activities that can optimise children's literacy achievements (Early & Winton, 2001; Justice & Pullen, 2003). Block *et al.* (2002: 181, cite Allington *et al.*, 1996; Baumann *et al.*, 1998; Block *et al.*, 2001; Block & Mangieri, 1996; Hoffman *et al.*, 1998; Sack & Mergendoller, 1997; see also Burchinal *et al.*, 2000; Honig & Hirallal, 1998, cited in Weigel *et al.*, 2005) and Callins (2006) further emphasise that teaching expertise and teacher training (NRPO, 2000, cited in Pang & Kamil, 2004: 20; Pearson, 2003) are crucial, in order to improve students' instructional experiences and teaching effectiveness (Rodgers *et al.*, 2002).

3.7.2.3 Teachers' literacy habits

Weigel *et al.* (2005) say that teachers' engagement in literacy behaviours is an area that has not been researched. In order to parallel the **Parents' literacy habits**, I propose that **Teachers' literacy habits** should include the literacy experiences that they expose the children to, (1) through the availability of literacy materials, and (2) through their modelling of literacy use.

With respect to the **Preschool Classroom Literacy Environment (PCLE)**, Dickinson & DeTemple (1998, refer to Durkin, 2004: 95; Neuman & Roskos, 1992: 220-221; Soderman *et al.*, 1999: 50) discuss the importance of building environmental print awareness in young children. Print rich classrooms are print laboratories, filled with print and flooded with print (Hoffman *et al.*, 2004: 305); they include print-related areas like a

library and a writing centre (Soderman *et al.*, 1999: 55; Vukelich *et al.*, 2002: 1), which contain “written notes, letters, books, labels, newspapers, magazines, and other reading materials. Crayons, pencils and paper, chalkboards, and other writing materials are readily available. People in the environment model the use of reading and writing in real-life situations” (Lauritzen, 1992: 535). Clark & Kragler (2006) and Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) have shown that print and writing materials in a print-rich classroom impact positively on children’s literacy development.

With respect to **teacher modelling of literacy use**, teachers have been described to read aloud in order to model literacy events (Neuman 1999; Taylor *et al.*, 2000). They also encourage children’s independent reading and writing (Durkin, 2004: 101; Soderman *et al.*, 1999: 58).

3.7.2.4 Teachers’ activities: Direct instruction

This is an area in which I have found less research, and I suppose it is because the role of explicitly teaching academic skills in preschool is contested (Bowman *et al.*, 2000, cited in McDonald Connor *et al.*, 2005). However, there is some evidence that early reading instruction can have a positive influence on preschoolers’ EL growth (McDonald Connor *et al.*, 2005). Connor *et al.* (2004) and Taylor *et al.* (2000) say that teachers who spend more time in academic activities tend to have students who demonstrate greater gains in, for example, reading skills. With respect to SL learners, Roberts & Neal (2004) carried out an intervention programme containing explicit instruction. They found clear evidence that “children at the very initial stages of English acquisition could learn both linguistic comprehension and decoding-related components of early literacy from explicit group instruction” (p. 283).

3.7.2.5 Teacher activities: Indirect instruction

In the preschool classroom, teachers have been found to use some activities that indirectly teach preschoolers about literacy. Reading is the most often referred to activity. While Ortiz *et al.* (2001) say that there is evidence that the amount of preschool

exposure to books and reading is related to child interest, Phillips *et al.* (1996) report on a literacy-reading intervention programme at kindergarten level, which had positive effects on children's knowledge of early literacy concepts and which improved students' reading achievement for the next four years. Different types of reading approaches have been described in the literature. For instance, teachers do picture book reading (Arnold & Whitehurst, 1994) and dialogic reading, developed by Whitehurst and his colleagues (Whitehurst *et al.*, 1994; Whitehurst *et al.*, 1999). Dialogic reading, which has been used experimentally and evaluated, shows that children engaging in dialogic reading make significantly larger vocabulary gains than children engaging in a regular book-reading situation (Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Whitehurst *et al.*, 1999: 262). Teachers also practise shared reading (Holdaway, 1979), an extension of bedtime storybook reading in the classroom, a time when the entire class gathers together to share a variety of literacy experiences by reading and writing a variety of texts (Fisher & Medvic, 2000: 3), such as rhymes, songs, poems, charts, stories, big books. Teachers and the class discuss the cover, the title and illustrations. The story is re-read several times over the next days, with follow-up activities (acting the story, drawing a favourite scene). According to Elley *et al.* (1996), shared reading has the advantage of providing good language models, creating enjoyment, focusing on meaning and providing opportunity for learner participation. For beginning pupils, the most successful books contain patterned language, with natural dialogue and familiar vocabulary, with attractive illustration and a good storyline. According to Elley *et al.* (1996), teachers with modest education can practise shared reading after a two-day workshop. The book flood projects in Fiji (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), Singapore (the REAP programme, Ng & Sullivan, 2001), South Africa (the READ programme, Schollar, 2001), Sri Lanka (Kuruppu, 2001) have used shared book reading and the research carried out indicates benefits of storybook reading for language learners. Elley (2001b: 236) points out that the Singaporean REAP project was unusually effective with beginner (Grade1) L2 learners. The shared reading experience develops children's concepts of print, children's interest in reading, their familiarity with the text, their independence, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. All these skills are developed in a supportive environment where scaffolding is used

(Fisher & Medvic, 2000: 3). Another approach used for second language learners is the Modified Guided Reading approach (Avalos *et al.*, 2007) where teachers use carefully selected graded level books (early emergent, emergent, early fluency, fluency) in order to provide students with the understanding that reading is about creating and gaining meaning from text. Such approaches to reading, where reading is seen as a meaning-making enterprise, seem to be lacking in primary schools in Mauritius as pointed out in Ch2.4.3.

3.7.2.6 Teachers' beliefs

Research (Abbott-Shim *et al.*, 2000: 118; Commeyras & DeGroff, 1998: 438; Stipek & Byler, 1997: 305) indicates that teacher's beliefs, defined as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, cited in Peacock, 2001: 178), impact upon their classroom practices. More specifically, Neuman & Celano (2001) argue that teachers' beliefs about (1) children's literacy development, and (2) their own role in the children's development are related to children's literacy achievements.

3.7.3 The limitations of EBRR

In the context where there is limited research on EL in postcolonial settings, the above literature review has indicated the possible conceptual (EL as consisting of discrete skills developed at home/preschool), methodological (quantitative correlation studies) and analytical (statistical measures) tools that can be used to research my own field. However, the main limitation of the EBRR is that it emerged and developed in a specific context (generally white American middle class families where children learn to read and write in their L1), therefore making a number of assumptions about home literacy practices (for instance, regular book reading), which are not necessarily applicable across cultures. The question about the relevance of Western theory, Western models, and Western empirical studies to carry out research in neo-/postcolonial settings has been raised by Brock-Utne (2003, cited in Holmarsdottir, 2003) and Makoni (1994), who argue that the tensions, problems and challenges are locally situated and should be

addressed within context. This has directed me to explore, against the more skills-based literature reviewed till now, the emerging literature on New Literacies. I propose to draw on New Literacy Studies (henceforth, NLS) to contextualise EL in the Mauritian context.

3.8 The larger context of EL development

3.8.1 New Literacy Studies: Its contribution to conceptualising ‘literacy’

EBRR has been critiqued for its limited conceptualisation of literacy as the personal process of decoding and encoding (the **autonomous model**, Street, 1984), without consideration for learners’ social reality (Freire & Makedo, 1987), “without consideration of context [which] belies the complex nature of reading and writing” (Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 3), without looking beyond pedagogy and the classroom into larger social phenomena (Barton, 2001). I would, however, say that this last critique is unfair to the extent that the contribution of the home environment in developing emergent literacy has been widely acknowledged and researched, as is evidenced in the previous sections. The assumptions underlying the empirical data of the previously reviewed literature are thus questioned by NLS, which is a new approach to thinking about literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006: 24).

The pioneer scholars of NLS (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 1996, 1999; Luke & Baynham, 2004; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Street, 1984, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005; refer to Prinsloo, 2005, for a comprehensive review of the history of NLS) have taken a more socially and culturally sensitive approach to literacy, contextualising literacy practices in milieus other than white middle class Euro-Americans - what Street (1984) calls the **ideological model**. They have looked at everyday life literacy practices, pointing out that reading and writing are embedded in the social activities of life. In the view of NLS, being literate centres on individuals’ ability to understand and produce written texts that are embedded in and appropriate to particular contexts.

A driving notion in NLS is that of ‘literacy practices’. They are understood to be “ways of talking, listening, writing, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing and feeling

(and using various objects, symbols, images, tools, and technologies) in the service of enacting meaningful socially situated identities and activities” (Gee, 2001: 719; Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 17). Street (2003a: 81) has emphasised the importance of this term, since it enables one to specify the particularity of the cultural practices with which the uses of reading and writing are associated in given contexts. Related to the term ‘literacy practices’ are the following concepts:

- **The notion of group membership:** being a member of a literate group means understanding, constructing and engaging in literate actions that mark membership in that group (Chandler, 1992; Putney, 1996, Rex *et al.*, 1997, cited in Castanheira *et al.*, 2001: 356). That is why NLS embeds schooled literacy practices within the wider and more general literacy practices;
- **The discourse/Discourse division:** literacy can be defined and understood in relation to Discourses, a Foucauldian construct used by Gee (1996), to refer to the configuration of values, practices, modes of conduct as well as to a way of communicating specific information to groups and institutions (Collins, 2000: 71). Gee (1999: 6-7) defines discourse (with a small ‘d’) as various stretches of language that constitute much of the give and take of everyday life, stretches of talk that exist in particular sites where identities are being played out. On the other hand, Discourse (with a big ‘D’) is the larger, pervasive and often invisible set of values, beliefs and ideas with which we are positioned, into which we are socialised in various social settings (Rogers, 2002: 253), and which potentially impact on our behaviour. The conceptual distinction made between the two types of discourses helps us understand that discourses exist within Discourses, while acknowledging that they are intricately interlinked;
- **The concept of power:** Baynham & Prinsloo (2001: 84) say that literacy practices are shaped by institutionalised, as well as informal, power relations. Within such a perspective, it is acknowledged that some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others. There is always a choice to be made and what is selected depends on what forms of knowledge have

authority and whose Discourses dominate (Kell, 1995, Papen, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005).

In the field of education, Street (2003b: 84) draws on NLS to make some proposals for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. For instance, he says that acknowledging that literacy is more complex than current curricula and assessment allow is one step towards a more holistic approach to literacy instruction.

The ethnographic approach has been extensively used to study literacy practices because such a methodological approach has thrown light on how meaning is constructed around literacy events and practices (Banda, 2003).

3.8.2 Critiques of NLS

NLS have not been without critique (refer to the heated Gee/Snow debate reviewed in Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 147, where Snow argues that there is a lack of empirical research to support this new approach to literacy studies). Collins and Blot (2003) have argued that NLS have failed to theorize issues of power with regards to literacy, while Hull & Schultz (2002: 25) have critiqued NLS for their focus on the ways in which literacy is “infused by ideology”, with little (if any) interest in the cognitive dimension it might have.

In educational terms, Kim (2003) has argued that despite the fact that teachers may be convinced by the theoretical insights of NLS, in practice they must still work within the increasingly narrow constraints of the school system and the curriculum. In fact, there have been a few attempts to use the underlying principles of NLS to plan and implement curricula. Papen (2005: 6) mentions such attempts in adult literacy education in countries like South Africa, Nigeria, Nepal, and Namibia. The major challenge in these endeavours has been that the learners’ and facilitators’ conceptions of literacy differed from and even opposed the views of literacy put forward by external project consultants. Papen (2005) thus argues that the learners’ discourse about literacy, their aspirations for literacy and

learning, their conceptions of literacy cannot be underestimated when planning projects. She gives the example of Namibia, where possessing English literacy is perceived as crucial in gaining social upward mobility and economic capital. Furthermore, Namibian adult learners have tended to demonstrate a “positive orientation towards a school-based model of education” (Papen, 2005: 13; also refer to Betts’, 2001, research in El Salvador; Dyer & Choksi’s, 2001, research in India; Mpoyiya and Prinsloo’s, 1996, research in a township in Cape Town; and Papen’s research in Namibia, 2001, 2002, 2004). Papen (2005) argues convincingly that one should look beyond the instrumental uses of literacy to examine the symbolic roles of literacy and education in people’s lives (Aikman, 2001), the “symbolic importance of literacy” (Millican, 2004: 199), the discourses about literacy. It is interesting to note that the principles of NLS have been used for adult literacy programmes in developing countries rather than developed countries (see Prinsloo & Breier, 1996).

Murray (2002: 443) has claimed that the multiplicity within literacy, as it is conceptualised by the word ‘literacies’ (language, cultural, critical, media), carries the potential to create new boundaries. Although Murray admits that it is important to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of literacy and literacy practices which should inform curricula, it is equally important that “we should not lose sight of the importance of schools to teach children to read and write” (Murray, 2002: 443). Similarly, Christie (2005) argues that setting up a dichotomy between models, as Street (1984) does, diverts attention from the nature of language as a meaning-making system. Indeed, these words are enlightening in the sense that they bring our attention back to a simple fact: unlike language, which is acquired naturally, literacy has to be learnt. The process of learning to read and write cannot be taken for granted - reading and writing are taught by knowledgeable others. Prior to reading, children and adults need to be taught how to read and write. Immersing a child in print will not help the still illiterate child crack the code that will lead to reading proficiency.

3.9 Review of existing research on the language and literacy issues in preschool education

In this sub-section, I critically review the little research that has been carried out on preschool literacy in postcolonial contexts

3.9.1 Botswana

Taiwo & Tyolob's (2002) study indicates that children who have been to preschool are better prepared for Grade 1 than those who have not. Although this study does not focus specifically on emerging literacy practices among Botswana preschool children, some of the questions assigned to the children in the assessment test their oral English proficiency and their pre-reading and pre-writing skills. For instance, children were asked to name body parts, count numbers up to ten, and recite first five letters of the alphabet.

Despite the fact that this study contributes to the research base on early literacy in other non-European contexts, some of the problems are that (1) it is not written within a clearly-articulated theoretical framework, (2) the test used in the study is problematical to the extent that it shows no evidence of theoretical grounding, it is only face-validated (a weak measure of validation), and (3) the test-retest was done on a very small sample of children (n=10), with a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

3.9.2 South Africa

Prinsloo's (2004, 2005) work and Bloch's (1997, 1999, 2000, 2002b, 2006) work focus on EL in the South African context and they emphasise the fact that contexts for literacy development in Northern countries are not necessarily the same for Southern countries (Bloch, 2000a). Working within the NLS framework, their work signals a move away from early NLS work (which appear to celebrate the literacy practices of marginal societies, perceived to be illiterate societies) by looking at mainstream groups (Prinsloo, 2004), such as the preschool.

In their work on the South African preschool curriculum, they critically analyse Curriculum 2005 to argue that it frames discussion within “an autocratic and opaque English discourse” (Bloch, 2000a: 196), hence the weakness of teacher training - the RNCS (2002) moves away from this. In their work on the South African preschool, they show that that South African children come to school with oral skills, and argue that these skills can be used to develop literacy skills (Bloch & Prinsloo, 1999). They also describe the preschool as a site of complex literacy practices, mediated by teachers, who socialise children into particular ways of seeing literacy (Prinsloo, 2005), pointing out that teachers’ various understandings of literacy might explain the disjuncture between educational policy and practice (Bloch & Prinsloo, 1999). As well as critically assessing the South African context, Bloch (2000a: 198) has made practical suggestions and developed materials relevant to the South African context. She has also initiated a number of literacy projects: a project on bilingual literacy in Xhosa and English in Cape Town (Bloch, 2002b); The Children’s Early Literacy Learning (CELL) two-year ethnographic project investigating the ways in which children make sense of written language; The Concentrated Language Encounter project aiming to encourage teachers to shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach through the ‘whole language approach’ to literacy development; the Family Literacy Pilot Project aiming to support the literacy practices of children’s caregivers (refer to Bloch, 2005, for more detail and other projects).

Despite their contribution to describing, assessing, evaluating, and changing the South African preschool context, there are some critiques that can be made of their work. First, their work tends to underplay children’s individual differences as they enter school by calling such an approach a ‘deficiency model’. However, not addressing these individual differences can be a problem in children’s literacy and educational development (refer to Stanovich’s (1986, 2000) ‘Matthew effect,’ Ch3.3). Secondly, although their work acknowledges that preschool teachers are concerned with preparing preschool children for Grade1 (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004), it fails to give due consideration the research-base on the importance of discrete skills in facilitating the transition to primary school and in

enhancing literacy development. Third, in terms of research methodology, their work makes a number of claims, which are not supported by empirical data. For example, Bloch (2002b) claims that South Africans can use their L1 literacy as a stepping stone for L2 literacy but does not measure the effects of these benefits, apart from the researcher's own (subjective) observations. Moreover, Bloch and Edwards (1999) potentially oversimplify the transfer of skills from the L1 to the L2, without addressing the essential question of the extent to which this transfer of skills is automatic in the local context. Another example is Prinsloo & Stein (2004) who mention a pre-reading 'war-dance' activity likely to enhance children's phonemic awareness, with no empirical evidence to support this belief. Finally, as far as teacher practices are concerned, their work tends to compare different teachers' pedagogy (Prinsloo, 2005), hence almost implicitly holding teachers responsible for their teaching approach. This approach tends to neglect teacher training as a mediating factor in children's literacy development. Although the NLS approach claims to take a socio-cultural approach, the approach here described fails to recognise teachers as part of a larger system.

Even though their work is of limited relevance for Mauritius because it focuses on a context where South African children learn to read and write in their L1 and English (Bloch, 2002a: 20), a critical approach to their work further contributes to providing directions for my own research.

3.9.3 Singapore

Quentin Dixon (2004) examines the state of Singaporean kindergartners' oral English proficiency and early literacy skills. The rationale for Dixon's study is that Singaporean students are expected to learn subject-area content (maths, science) through reading textbooks in English. She thus argues that it is important to study the skills that children bring to school that are critical for reading achievement in elementary school: oral language and early literacy (letter and word recognition, writing and spelling). She finds that oral language proficiency (in particular vocabulary in the Singaporean sample) seems

to play a role in Singaporean children's literacy skills, just as it does for monolingual English speakers in the US.

3.9.4 Mauritius

The paucity of research on the language question in preschool education has been acknowledged in the literature on Mauritian preschool education (The Report of the Commission of Enquiry (1979) and Bennett's (2000) report). During my literature search, apart from Tirvassen's exploratory academic work, I could find very little research on language issue in pre-primary education in Mauritius.⁴¹

3.9.4.1 Tirvassen's work (1997, 2001)

From his research focusing on primary education, Tirvassen (1997: 378) claims that the teaching of languages and the communication between teacher and children at preschool level are limited to the teacher's production of certain morpho-syntactic structures and a repetition by the children of those structures to be learnt. Teachers have been observed to limit themselves to such simple structures as "it's his/hers," the teacher is the main speaker and the children's linguistic production limited itself to a mechanical repetition of the teacher's words/phrases/sentences. Tirvassen thus claims that there is confusion between teaching a language as a means of communication and teaching a language as an object of mechanical repetition. Tirvassen holds the language policy at pre-primary level, which is a compromise by politicians to satisfy socio-political lobbies, partly responsible for the observed teaching practices.

3.9.4.2 Tirvassen's work (2005)

Tirvassen (2005) studies the role of language as one variable affecting school success or school failure. Tirvassen (2005) draws upon Bernstein's distinction between elaborated and restricted codes to argue that there has been a lot of emphasis on language choice in multilingual settings (that is, education in the L1 is necessarily better than education in

⁴¹ There are a number of BA dissertations done on the pre-primary sector, supervised by Miss Ballgobin, at the University of Mauritius.

the L2), and not enough on the quality of the language that learners are exposed to. Basing himself on the research carried out by Si Moussa (2003) and Tupin (2003) in Réunion Island and Dijon (France), he suggests that parents' educational background affects the quality of the language that they expose their children to, and it is this language (elaborated code) that the children come across in school. Tirvassen's (2005) study helps to broaden our perspective and encourages us to look at various factors affecting the quality of preschool education, rather than focusing on MoI and LoL only. In this context, he argues that any language policy to be adopted in pre-primary education in Mauritius should take into account the various factors that may impact on the success or failure of students, as well as the variables that may impact on the implementation of such a language policy. Tirvassen regrets the lack of adequate conceptual tools and fieldwork to be used as a background to the eventual formulation of a language policy for the Mauritian preschool sector. Although this article does not add much to empirical knowledge on the preschool sector in Mauritius, it does invite more diligent research with the use of finer conceptual tools, an invitation, which this present research aims to respond to.

3.9.4.3 Critique of Tirvassen's work

Because of his status as a member of the French Department of the MIE, Tirvassen's work has focused on the teaching of French rather than English. Moreover, his interest in preschool education is tangential to his focus on primary education. His 1997 paper presents a number of methodological limitations. First, his status as teacher trainer (which he admits) renders problematical data collection and analysis. Secondly, the restricted number of schools visited limits the generalisation of his conclusions. Finally, his work fails to look at the macro-context, to explain the observed language teaching practices. In his 2005 work, Tirvassen starts, in a very French style, to reflect upon the LiEP and the language issue in the preschool sector, but he does not go as far as making concrete proposals.

3.10 My stance as a researcher

At this point in time, it is important to sum up my theoretical stance, which draws upon the literature reviewed and which will inform the rest of this study. Although the literature reviewed in this chapter has drawn heavily upon the EBBR, which emphasises the importance of developing discrete skills at the foundation stage of literacy development, this literature review has also remained sensitive to socio-cultural context as conceptualised by the NLS approach. In other words, this work has rejected an either-or stand and has adopted a more integrated view of emergent literacy development. As Cummins (2005a: 146) points out, “highlighting the social dimensions of cognition does not invalidate a research focus on what may be happening inside the heads of individuals.” Similarly, Pahl & Roswell (2005: 9) have argued that the two approaches to literacy are not seen as being mutually exclusive, but as points on a continuum between literacy as a purely personal skill and literacy as a social and cultural act, with each enriching each other instead of being set against each other. I thus endorse Street’s (2003b) view that the researcher should make explicit one’s understanding of literacy development lies in how one conceptualises language and literacy, that the researcher should make explicit the theory on which his/her actions are based and to follow through the implications of that theory.

Bearing in mind the particularities of the Mauritian context, where children learn to read and write in a language other than their L1, I herewith articulate the six theoretical principles upon which this thesis is founded:

- 1) Although it is desirable to have MT literacy, the unavailability of MT literacy does not destine the learner to fail in terms of literacy achievement, or to fail educationally and academically;
- 2) Literacy consists of a set of skills (oral/decoding), which form the basis of reading and writing: without oral skills or the ability to understand the sound/grapheme relationship, it is impossible to start the reading and writing-with-understanding process. These skills are crucial, albeit vital, at the foundation phases of literacy instruction. Some these skills (knowledge of the alphabet) have to be learnt, while

other can be acquired (awareness of print, oral language) depending on the context. The skills, which are considered important in the local context, are set out below:

1. Print/Decoding Skills**a. Print knowledge**

- Concepts of print
- Attitudes to print

b. Familiarity with the alphabet**2. Oral skills: Language comprehension**

- 3) In contexts where children do not learn to read and write in their L1, proficiency in the language of literacy facilitates and enhances literacy development. Foreign language proficiency can be arrived at if the school creates the environment conducive to the development of foreign language proficiency that will prepare and help learners access the literate code;
- 4) While in SL learning situations children are immersed in the meaningful use of the L2, FL learning typically takes place in the classroom. This has implications for the language and literacy curriculum, as well as for language teaching methodologies and approaches to literacy instruction;
- 5) While it is acknowledged that parents have an important role to play in children's early literacy development, the school (curriculum, teachers) has the responsibility to teach children to read and write, and this even more so in developing countries where there is mismatch between the home language and the main language of literacy;
- 6) Language teaching and language learning and literacy instruction are not context-free: learners learn languages and develop literacy skills in social, cultural and political contexts that constrain the linguistic forms they hear and use and the literacy experiences they have.

The above discussion provides me with a working description of 'EL development' that I will employ to inform and shape the rest of this thesis: **Emergent Literacy consists of a**

set of skills (oral/decoding), the development and use of which are embedded in certain practices, which are informed by and which inform the particular social and cultural contexts in which they occur.

3.11 Relevance of the literature review to my study

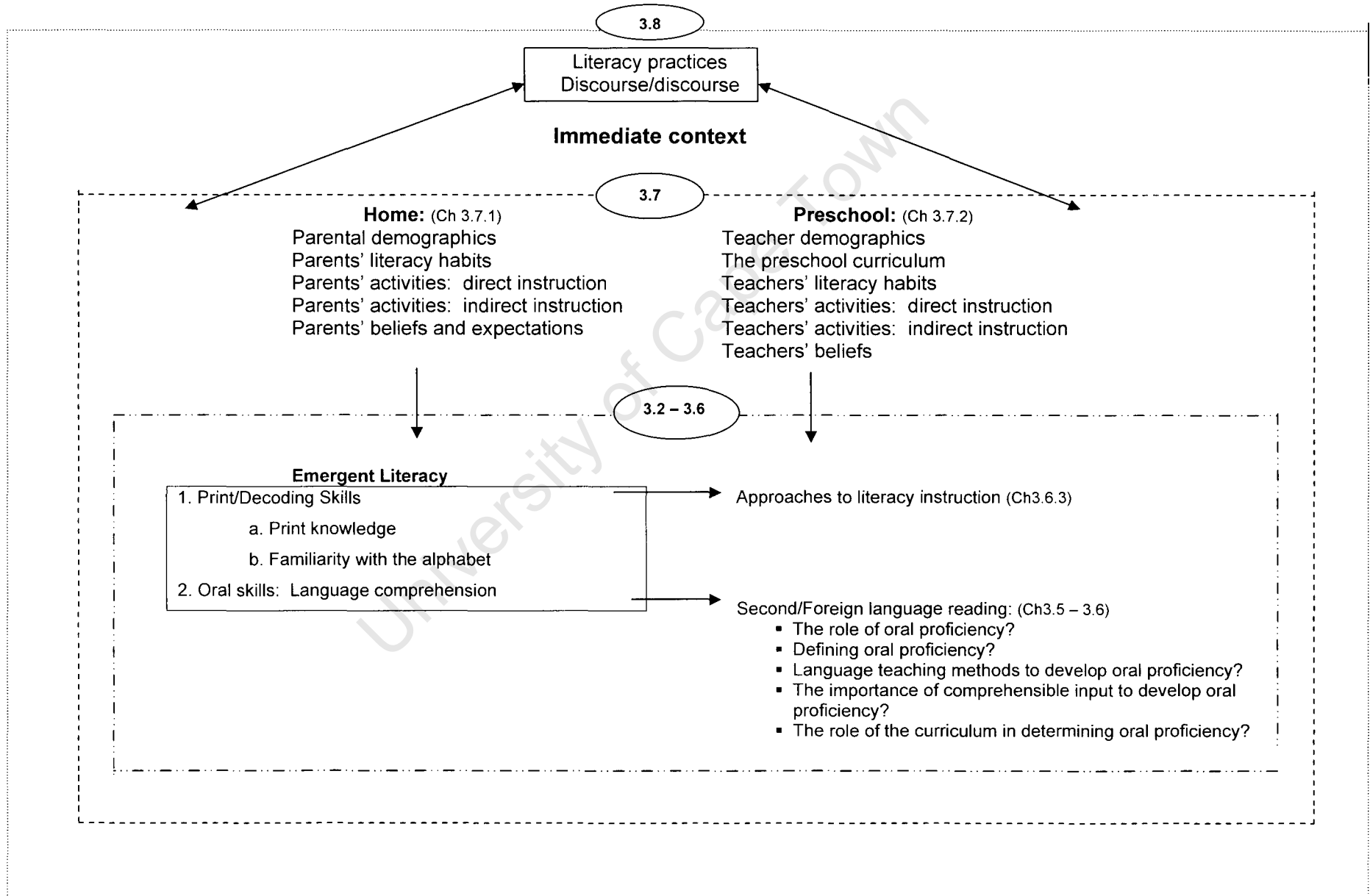
In the absence of adequate tools to address my main **RQs** and **SRQs**, I have engaged myself in a review of the existing literature. This literature review has led me to articulate my theoretical stance, which will provide the conceptual lenses needed to observe, describe and analyse critically:

- 1) the Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines and Teacher Training Programmes,
- 2) the pedagogical practices related to teaching oral English in the preschool sector,
- 3) the literacy practices in preschools,
- 4) the role of the home context and the wider historical, social, economic, political and linguistic local/global context.

The literature review has also enlightened me on ways to design a test to assess the pre-primary school children's literacy development over their final pre-school year, and has informed my choice about the research design and methodology (Ch4).

3.12 Diagram summarising the theoretical underpinnings to this thesis

The larger context (historical, political, social, linguistic)



3.13 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has used an interdisciplinary approach (Pang & Kamil, 2004) with theory being used as a tool in directing the ensuing empirical research. Since this research is largely exploratory in nature, I have reviewed the literature on:

- **EBRR within the Emergent Literacy approach:** this has pointed out the importance of early preschool literacy experiences (in the preschool and the home) as precursors to enhanced literacy and educational development;
- **Reading in a language other than the L1:** this has argued for the importance of oral skills for enhanced L_n reading;
- **Language/Literacy teaching:** this has indicated that despite the different approaches to language/literacy teaching, (1) the issue of input is crucial in order for the objectives of language learning to be met, (2) the appropriate pedagogical approaches have to be identified *in situ*, and (3) the curriculum can make provisions for pedagogical approaches;
- **New Literacy Studies:** this has pointed out that the wider context cannot be ignored if a full understanding of children's emergent literacy experiences is desired;
- **Empirical studies** on early language and literacy development in some postcolonial settings: this has indicated that a more enriched theoretical and conceptual kit would enlighten us on early literacy development in foreign language contexts.

This review has suggested ways of collecting and analysing data, which will be described in the coming chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Research design and methodology

4.1 Introduction

The main elements driving the research design of this thesis are as follows:

- 1) The working description of emergent literacy, which was reached in Ch3.10: EL a set of skills (oral and decoding), the development and use of which are embedded in certain practices, which are informed by and which inform the particular social and cultural contexts in which they occur;
- 2) My stance as a researcher: While being aware of the impact of post-structuralism and postmodernism on methodological development, I have taken an approach similar to that discussed in Atkinson & Delamont (2005: 821ff) and Delamont & Atkinson (2004: 667ff). This approach does not underestimate the importance of structure, patterning, organisation and intrinsic order in social and cultural behaviour. On the contrary, this approach provides “principled ways of understanding data of different sorts as reflections of codes of social order” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005: 828), as well as offers ways of reconciling a number of tensions within the current treatment of qualitative data. Although I endorse the importance of reflexivity and self-awareness when carrying out fieldwork, as do Delamont & Atkinson (2004: 679), I also acknowledge the significant contribution of previous decades of research in providing analytical tools to handle data in a **systematic and organised fashion**;
- 3) The experience of the pilot study, carried out in April - September 2004 and described in Ch1.6.

4.2 From the pilot study onwards

As discussed in Ch1.6, the pilot study was enlightening in terms of what methodology to adopt for the main study. While the cross-sectional approach of the pilot provided descriptive data, it failed to reveal the development of teachers’ teaching practices over time, it failed to explain the reasons underlying the teachers’ observed practices, and it failed to show the learners’ progress in oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing over

their final preschool year. Furthermore, the pilot study showed that access through the TES posed problems in terms of perceived power relations. The pilot study thus indicated that an alternative qualitative methodological approach should be used, a methodology which would provide a more complete picture of the classroom situation, in terms of exposure to and teaching of oral English and literacy in an FL context.

The choice of a qualitative approach seems justifiable in the light of the recent critiques made against quantitative research. Kanjee (2007) has shown the limitations of the quantitative approach taken by such reports as *Monitoring Learning Achievement, Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation* (2001) and *Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation* (2004) in South Africa, suggesting the need for an interplay between qualitative and quantitative approaches to get a fuller understanding of nuances. Similarly, Nikula (2005: 29) cites Baker (2003: 103) and Young (2001: 3) to point out the importance of close attention to what is actually taking place in the classroom. A longitudinal case study using an ethnographic approach (**Phase 2**), complemented by document analysis (**Phase 1**), and including a quasi-experimental design (**Phase 3**), was thus chosen.

From the preschools visited during the pilot study, one preschool - Preschool B (PSB) - was identified to participate in the main quasi-experimental study because of the friendly and open attitude of the teachers and headmaster and because it housed lower middle class and working class children, who are not advantaged by their home background. The TES was then asked to recommend a preschool with children from a similar socio-economic background, and in a similar region. The TES sent me to another preschool - Preschool A (PSA) -, where the teachers and headmaster showed interest in participating in the yearlong case study.

By the beginning of October 2004, I had selected the two preschools, which would be part of my main 2005 study:

- **PSA (Phase 2):** An ethnographic approach to the case-study was used to address **SRQ(i-xi)**, as articulated in Ch1.8;

- **PSB (Phase 3):** A quasi-experimental design involving an Oral English Intervention Programme (OEIP), was used to address the question of the desirability of using an alternative approach to introducing oral English at preschool level in Mauritius - **SRQ(xii)**.

In October 2004, I also asked the teachers to identify a number of subjects who would participate in the main 2005 study.

The salient components of the research design (Opie, 2004) for the main study are described below.

4.3 Phase 1: Document analysis

Although the focus of my study is classroom practices, I acknowledge that the analysis of spoken language remains firmly embedded in studies of organisational contexts, processes of socialisation, and routines of work (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005: 826). It is a fact that Mauritian teachers work within the well-established local education system, where texts (official policy documents and documentary records) are pervasively significant (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004: 57). Like spoken texts, written texts are also embedded in the contexts in which they are produced. According to Prior (2004: 77), texts are produced, manipulated, used and consumed; they urge people to act in specific ways. Since spoken texts are affected by written texts, and written texts are themselves grounded in the local context, it seemed essential for my study to review written documents, against which and with which teachers operate: curriculum guidelines, teacher training materials and teachers' work plans (yearly, weekly, and daily plans). Written documents are a special category of texts since they function as institutionalised traces - Wolff (2004: 284).

The approach to text analysis that I took is described in Perakyla (2005) as "the informal approach." This approach, taken by Armstrong (1998, 2002) with reference to medical texts, focuses on the contents (rather than the linguistic forms) of the documents, trying to pin down the assumptions and presuppositions that they incorporate. This approach also remains sensitive to the time of text publication, it is informed by theory and it sees texts

and practices as inseparable (with texts serving as guidelines for social practices). Commeyras & Inyega (2007), who investigate reading practices in Kenyan primary schools, use document analysis in their research.

I thus engaged myself in an analysis of the main texts that are relevant to preschool education in Mauritius, namely, the 1997PPG, the 2003PPG and the teacher training manuals. Also, in order to triangulate the text analyses, I used semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2002: 89) of expert informants, directly involved in the preparation or review of the texts analysed. This helped me get an inner perspective on text production.

4.4 Phase 2: An ethnographic approach to the case study

The main empirical study was informed by two methodological approaches: ethnography and case study.

4.4.1 The approach taken

4.4.1.1 Ethnography

A qualitative research design, of which the ethnographic approach forms part, was adopted to investigate the practices related to the exposure to and teaching of oral English and literacy in the preschool classroom (and the home), because it claims to describe life **holistically** in its naturally occurring environments (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 140; Johnson, 1992: 144; Nunan 1992: 53), “from inside out”, from the view point of the people who participate (Flick *et al.*, 2004: 1). The aim of qualitative research is to contribute to a better understanding of social realities, by drawing attention to the processes, patterns and structural features. Qualitative researchers make a number of assumptions (Flick *et al.*, 2004: 6) that I endorse. These assumptions influenced the way in which I approached the research sites. For instance:

- Qualitative research views social reality as the result of meanings and contexts that are jointly created in interaction: as far as possible I remained sensitive to the relationship between particularities of the macro-context and the specificities of micro-context (the research sites - school culture, teachers, learners, parents - I was visiting). I also paid particular attention to the ways

in which the main actors embrace, create and respond to the particularities of their situation;

- For qualitative researchers, the shared world is created daily by involved actors: in this context, giving voice to the main actors involved in the teaching process (teachers, parents) was crucial in order to try and make sense of the teaching and learning process in the local context;
- Qualitative research acknowledges that human beings live in life situations, some of which can be characterised: although describing human life and social reality is a complex philosophical endeavour, I have nonetheless been motivated by the belief that human life and social reality are not totally *ad hoc* states of being or processes. There is some degree of pattern and coherence in human life and social reality, and it is these patterns that I have tried to capture, understand, describe and explain.

The selected ethnographic approach was informed by researchers such as Corbett (2003), Griffiths (2000), and Nunan (1992), who argue that ethnography can give comprehensive descriptions, provide deeper understanding of language learning in a classroom context, explore the policy and reality interface, before attempting to propose changes that might be perceived by the target group as inappropriate and unnecessary. The chosen ethnographic approach was also influenced by the work done in the USA (Heath, 1983), the UK (*The Box Hill Nursery Project*, Thompson, 2000), and in South Africa (Bloch, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Prinsloo, 2004). However, the critique and methodological shortcomings of the South African research on EL (Ch3.9.2) enlightened the design for this study: they directed me to assess the development of the learners' learning experiences through a pre-/post-test design. Such testing is more typical of quantitative research designs.

4.4.1.2 The case study

In order to get an in-depth view of teaching and learning experiences in PSA, I used the **case study** method (Gillham, 2000: 13). The definition of the case study, informing this thesis, is a 'contextualised contemporary phenomenon within specified boundaries'

(Hatch, 2002: 30; Opie, 2004: 74), where close attention is paid to the social, political and other contexts (Stake, 2005: 444). Unlike the “intrinsic case study”, which aims at understanding the one case, this research is an “instrumental case study” (Stake, 2005: 444), where the case has been examined mainly (1) to provide insights into, and (2) to facilitate understanding of the interface between official documents and teaching practices in preschools.

Writing about case studies, Flick (2002: 147) says that it is important to delimit the unit under investigation and to make clear what the case represents. For this research, the case referred to is one preschool classroom (PSA), with its three preschool teachers and its learners. This preschool houses ‘middle children’: those lower-middle and working class children who form part of the majority of Mauritian school children, but who are often forgotten by the education system because they are neither children from local élite high-performing pre-primary and primary schools, nor from the special ZEP (Zone D’éducation Prioritaire - schools deserving special attention) schools which take care of low-performing, marginalised children.

4.4.2 Subjects in PSA

Following my visit to PSA during the pilot study, I was invited to attend the 2004 end-of-year party. This indicated to me that the teachers had trust and that I could ask them if I could work with them for my research in 2005. When asked, they immediately agreed. At the end-of-year party, in October 2004, at which parents were invited and were present, the teachers introduced me and I was given a chance to explain what my status and work were. Parents showed no resistance to my being present throughout 2005, to observe the teachers and their children.

4.4.2.1 Teachers

My aim being to understand the reasons underlying the approach to exposing children to and teaching children oral English and the literacy practices in preschool classrooms, I have considered teachers as the main focus of this research (Callins, 2006). The three teachers from PSA constituted the key informants (Merkens, 2004: 169):

- They are female, middle-aged, with families;
- They have all acquired upper secondary education and are professionally qualified;
- They have between 16 to 19 years of teaching experience;
- They are native speakers of Kreol, a language they use in their day-to-day lives

I will henceforth refer to them as T1, T2 and T3.

4.4.2.2 Learners

All Government preschools in Mauritius take in 3 - and 4 - year olds. Because my focus is on children in their final preschool year, a group of PSA learners (both male and female) was selected using criterion sampling (Patton, 2002). The two criteria used to select the children were (1) children who showed no evidence of late development,⁴² and (2) children who regularly attended school.⁴³

In October 2004, PSA teachers were asked to make the selection and they indicated the 4 - year old preschool children who could participate in the main 2005 study. There were 13 subjects (5 male, 8 female), the average age of the subjects was 4.4 years in October 2004.

4.4.2.3 Parents

Given that the theoretical review (Ch3.7.1) emphasised the important role of the home for children's language and literacy development, data (through structured phone interviews) were collected from parents to consider the literate identities of the children involved in my main study.

⁴² In PSA, there was a little girl, who could still not communicate in her first language, she sometimes could not control her bowel, and her teachers advised that she could not be taken on the outing without parental supervision because of her problems.

⁴³ Since the children were in their final year of pre-primary schooling, their teachers were able to say whether they had been regular in attending school during 2004.

4.4.3 Some critiques of the approach adopted and measures taken to deal with methodological shortcomings

Qualitative research has been critiqued because of the possible threats to credibility. For instance, there is the danger that researchers withhold information or are subjective, thus leading to unreliable and invalid data and data analysis (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 166). Below, I describe the strategies that have been utilised in the research design and methodology, so as to establish trustworthiness in the study.

4.4.3.1 Ethics

A number of researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 689; Hopf, 2004: 335-339; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001: 347) have pointed out the critical importance of ethical issues as the researcher engages in qualitative research. These ethical issues were taken into account while designing the main study. Once access to PSA was obtained through the Regional Co-ordinator and TES, I worked on building a rapport and trust with the head teacher and teachers: I explicitly dissociated myself from the supervisory role, I adopted a 'learner role', and I valued the teachers' experience in the field (Aubrey, 2000: 119). Informed consent, through a letter detailing the aims and objectives of the study, was sought from both head teacher and teachers before beginning the study. Written approval for being observed, tape-recorded and video-recorded was also solicited from the teachers. In this research, the teachers' anonymity was maintained in the data description and analysis. This does not imply that the teachers' voices were silenced.

4.4.3.2 Trustworthiness and credibility

Using the umbrella terms 'trustworthiness' and 'credibility', Opie (2004: 71) summarises the various concerns and critiques of the ethnographic approach dealt with more extensively elsewhere (Flick, 2002: 228ff; Chilisa & Preece, 2005: Ch9; Hatch, 2002: 16ff). The steps, taken to enhance trustworthiness and credibility, are:

- 1) Prolonged engagement in the field (a whole school year was spent in PSA) and description of the setting is included in this thesis;
- 2) Selective data recording, driven by the research questions;

- 3) Enhanced technical quality of recording using a tape recorder and a digital video-camera;
- 4) Peer debriefing: Ms Ballgobin, a colleague and an academic, was asked (i) to come to PSA to observe one session in the first term and second term, (ii) to view a selection of the video cassettes, (iii) to read a selection of transcripts and the data analysis, and (iv) to give feedback (**Appendix H**);
- 5) Methodological triangulation, described as “the comparison of data collected by various means” (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 167), was used, not so much as a strategy for validation of results and procedures but as an alternative to validation which increases the scope, depth, and consistency in methodological proceedings (Flick, 2002: 227). Classroom observations were triangulated with teacher interview data and daily/weekly work plans, and document analyses were triangulated with interviews of key informants and local expert informants.

4.4.3.3 Researcher’s identity

One of the concerns of postmodernist and poststructuralist traditions is that the researcher’s identity (gender, class and ethnicity) is a barrier to objectivity. I feel that my identity as an Asian female eased my entrance into the field, made my presence unobtrusive and facilitated my contact and relationship with the predominantly female, South Asian staff. For instance, we often exchanged recipes and talked about Hindi films. The rigour in the data collection procedures, as described in this chapter, contributed to reducing subjectivity.

4.4.4 The richness of the approach

The ethnographic approach was particularly time consuming and demanding, both physically and mentally:

- 1) I had to build a relationship of trust with the head teacher and the teachers, as well as pay attention to all the children at PSA;
- 2) I had to attend all social events: Independence Day, Sports Day, school outings, Music Day, end-of-term lunches, end-of-year party;

3) In PSA, where teachers brought their lunch daily and shared their food, it involved sharing that experience with them every week by cooking and bringing in (vegetarian) food. PSA teachers are Hindus, with two being non-vegetarian and one being strictly vegetarian. There were days (usually Tuesdays), and sometimes periods of time, when they were fasting and thus ate only vegetarian food. Although I am neither Hindu nor vegetarian, out of respect for the teachers, I always brought in vegetarian food to share with them at lunchtime, since sharing lunch was already part of the culture of the preschool when I started visiting PSA. This meant using kitchen utensils that had not been used in meat whenever I was cooking at home to bring to PSA;

4) I bought books for the classroom library when PSA teachers complained about the lack of library resources - this is what Holmes (1998: 27) calls "reciprocity."

This relationship was carried over to 2006 - 2007, when I was still being invited for end of term lunches and also asked to make a speech to the children of the attached primary school at the morning assembly.

4.4.5 Data gathering techniques

Different instruments were used to elicit different types of data to address the various RQs. These are described in more detail below.

4.4.5.1 Classroom observations

In view of the adopted ethnographic approach and in response to the serious limitations of self-report methods of research into adult literacy levels and uses (Fingeret, 1987; Newman & Beverstock, 1990, cited in Purcell-Gates, 1996: 410), in-the-preschool-classroom observations were used to address **SRQ(ii)** and **SRQ(iv)**. Classroom observations were conducted once a week, during the morning session, throughout 2005. Afternoon sessions were not attended after Week 4 given the nature of the children's activities in the afternoon - they were taken out to play and then given a 'light' activity (including free drawing, playing with dough, listening to music...). My main units of observation and analysis were the following:

- Circle-time (9.30 am to 10.00 am): All the children are gathered together in a big circle, say prayers, recall the day/month, talk about the weather, and

discuss different topics of actuality, sometimes including the theme they are working on.

- 10.15 - 10.45 am: Small Group Activity 1. In this activity, each of the three teachers takes their group of children, separating the younger ones from the older ones. While the younger ones are given a colouring activity, the older ones are 'taught' by their respective teacher. This activity is what PSA teachers consider 'a language activity' where the teachers and children talk about the theme they are working on that particular week, followed by a drawing activity.
- 10.45 - 11.15 am: Small Group Activity 2. This activity is the Mathematics period where teachers teach numbers and mathematical concepts, followed by a mathematical activity.

These activities allowed me to capture the moments at which and the contexts within which children were exposed to and taught oral English and literacy.

My status at PSA was 'observer-as-participant' (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 155). I interfered as little as possible in the classroom activities while not assuming a completely passive posture (Spradley, 1980) - I joined in for snack and lunch, but did not initiate any learning event. I placed myself in a corner of the classroom with a video camera and a tape recorder. The tape recorder was used to capture the oral discourse (exposure to English), while the video recorder was used to capture the oral as well as the visual data. With respect to the video recording, the teachers and the learners were not the object of the video but provided me with the lens for capturing the taught curriculum (Ch3.6.4). I transcribed the data, kept field notes on non-verbal behaviour, as well as took pictures of artefacts.

4.4.5.2 Proposed observation schedule for PSA

A number of preschool observation protocols are found in the literature: *The Observation Survey* (Clay, 2002), *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)* (Harms & Clifford, 1980; Harms *et al.*, 1998) and *TEX-IN3* (Hoffman *et al.*, 2004), which draws on a social practice perspective of literacy. Some of these protocols have even been assessed

for their validity (Denton *et al.*, 2006). However, I decided not to use them because these observation tools, developed and extensively used in developed largely monolingual countries, would bias the lens through which I would ‘see’ the data. Moreover, while these tools tend to assess the overall quality of classroom environments, they are not designed to capture the impact of specific curricula on early literacy development (Bracken & Fischel, 2006: 418). I thus used the 2003PPG, the literature review, my own preliminary observations and Tirvassen’s observations (1997, 2001 - Refer to Ch1.6 and 3.9.5) to propose two observation schedules:

Table 8: Observation schedule for activities including exposure to English in PSA

From the 2003PPG→	Songs	Stories	Nursery rhymes	Simple commands	Word exposure	Communicative games
Teachers’ language behaviour:						
Are any of these used? Characterise each.						
When? How frequently?						
Use of non-verbal aids?						
Use of verbal aids?						
Students’ language behaviour:						
Comprehension?						
Production?						
Any other behaviours that emerge from classroom observation?						

Table 9: Observation schedule for literacy-related activities in PSA

From the Literature Review →	Literacy habits	Direct instruction	Indirect instruction
Teachers' literacy behaviour: Are any of these used? Characterize each.			
When? How frequently?			
Use of non-verbal aids?			
Use of verbal aids?			
Students' language behaviour:			
Comprehension?			
Production?			
Any other behaviours that emerge from classroom observation?			

The observation protocols largely determined my choice of what to record (audio and video) during my weekly visits to PSA.

4.4.5.3 Observational field notes

As well as the tape and video recordings, observational field notes were kept throughout the study. I also recorded, in my field notes, summaries of my informal conversations (Richardson, 1994) with PSA teachers concerning their views and beliefs about issues relevant to my research topic.

4.4.5.4 Interviews

At PSA, I used unstructured interviews, known as stimulated recall technique, where I asked teachers about actual language and literacy choices, practices and experiences observed in class. These observations were recorded as part of my field notes and were integrated into the data analysis when appropriate.

Moreover, a post-observation structured individual interview was carried out with PSA teachers, while a structured phone individual interview was conducted out with the mothers (the advantages of the phone interview are discussed in Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 115 and Shy 2001: 540). Because I called during the day, it was usually mothers who were available. The few times I found a father at home, he would redirect me to his wife. I think this is culture specific: being still fairly traditional, men will generally prefer their wives to speak to other (unfamiliar, foreigner) women. Using pointers from the theoretical review (Ch3.7.1 & 3.7.2), I designed questionnaires for teachers (**Appendix I**) and parents (**Appendix J**). The questionnaires, used to guide the structured interviews, elicited information on teachers' and parents' (and by extension, the children's) demographic profiles, language profiles, language and literacy practices, as well as their beliefs and expectations. It is acknowledged that there are limitations to self-reporting methods of research (Sénéchal *et al.*, 1996). However, I used teacher interviews to triangulate with data obtained from observations of classroom teaching practices, and I used parent interviews, because home literacy practices were tangential to my main research interest, which is the classroom. Moreover, survey reports have been validated on the ground that they correlate statistically significantly with observational and diary assessments (Lonigan *et al.*, 1994), and the reliability of survey estimates has been demonstrated to be moderate (Burgess, 1999). In my case study, the focus was on the classroom practices, and no appropriate alternative (which would be less time-consuming) was found in the literature to gather information on teachers' and parents' home language and literacy practices. In terms of timing, I planned to run post-observation interviews, so as to avoid the risk of the interview-questions affecting teachers' and parents' practices during the year of observation. Pattman's (2002, described in Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 147) guidelines were used to conduct the interviews. I went through individual questions in Kreol with the teachers and parents to ensure that they understood the questions and I remained open to anything that the teachers and parents wanted to add. Any additional information was recorded as field notes (Opie, 2004:95ff).

Fontana & Frey (2005: 695-727) and Holstein & Gubrium (2004: 140ff) find problematical the view that interviewees are vessels-of-answers. They argue that interviews are not neutral tools for gathering data and that interviewees are actively implicated in meaning-making and meaning-construction. Hence, they have claimed that it is important for the interviewer to distinguish between the 'what' and the 'how' of the interview process, to understand the language and culture of the respondents, and to decide on how to present oneself. These were considered when conducting the interviews with the teachers and parents. The identity that I established with teachers was that of a learner and with the parents that of a university teacher (in the local context, the use of researcher would be intimidating) and parent (I mentioned that I have children in order to build trust and rapport over the phone). In both cases, I explained what the aims of the interview were. Kreol was the language used to carry out the interviews in order to reduce the formality of the conversation, as well as to downplay the power relationship. Edwards and Mauthner (2002: 26) use the term "asymmetrical reciprocity" to describe the interview situation as one where "rather than ignoring or blurring power relations, ethical practice needs to pay attention to them."

The data from the teacher-interviews have been integrated in Ch 5, 6 and 7 while the data from the parents' interviews are discussed in a separate chapter, Ch 8.

4.4.5.5 Assessment

Assessing the children

Although my pilot study had indicated that the children had limited proficiency in English as they left preschool, I had no systematic and objective way of assessing this. Since the literature on postcolonial settings did not reveal a suitable testing kit, a test had to be developed *in situ* for this study. The aim of the test was to assess the children's EL development between the time they started their final preschool year and the time they finished their final preschool year. My understanding of the elements constituting EL (Ch3.4) was used as a basis for designing the test, which consists of two parts:

- **Part 1:** Testing the Decoding/Print Skills Component of EL. This part of the test uses and adapts tests available in the literature on EL.

- **Part 2:** Testing the 'oral English proficiency' component of EL. This part was more problematic because a critical review of the English language tests available in the literature indicated the limitations of these tests, which have been designed for second language learners in developed countries. A test was thus prepared for the particular context in which I am working.

The test, its design procedures, its contents and its validity are described in detail in Ch9. The same test was used as a pre-test and a post-test: the testing threat was minimised since there was a 10-month time lapse between the two test administrations (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: 212). The pre- and post-tests were administered to the children using the principles and practices for child assessment described and discussed in Jalongo (2003) and Wortham (2002).

Assessing PSA teachers

Since the literature (Young *et al.*, 1995) suggests that the English language proficiency of teachers impacts on their English language teaching practices, it was important for me to assess the English oral language proficiency of PSA teachers. How did I go about this? Given that PSA teachers have reached Cambridge SC level, I decided to use the SC oral English exam as a benchmark for their oral English proficiency. It must be noted that although Mauritians have been sitting for the Cambridge SC exams for decades now, it is only since the past 10 years that candidates have been submitted to an Oral English exam. Given the teachers' age, I can say with confidence that the Cambridge exam they took did **not** include the oral English component. Hence, a past SC oral English exam paper was identified and used to test the three PSA teachers individually during the first week of November 2005. The test consisted of three parts: (1) reading a short passage in English, (2) describing a picture, and (3) carrying out a conversation in English.

4.4.6 Data analysis procedures

4.4.6.1 Classroom observations

In a technological era where various packages are available for ethnographic data processing, I used the word processor for coding because of the size of the project: the

funds and time available were not conducive to using particular and specialised software for ethnographic data analysis (Bisit, 2003: 152). Since this research focuses on two components of emergent literacy development (exposure to oral English and literacy), different approaches were used to analyse the different sets of data addressing different research questions (Ch3.8.1).

With respect to the exposure to and teaching of oral English: While my analysis of classroom discourse aligns itself with work done by Cazden (1988) and Martin-Jones (1995), I also drew upon the conceptual distinction that Gee (1999: 6-7) makes between discourse and Discourse to inform my analysis of the classroom observation data. Gee (1999: 6-7, refer to the discussion in Ch3.8.1) distinguishes discourse from Discourse:

- discourse - various stretches of language that constitute much of the give and take of everyday life, stretches of talk that exist in particular sites where identities are being played out;
- Discourse - the larger, pervasive and often invisible set of values, beliefs and ideas with which we are positioned in various social settings.

This conceptual distinction reminded me that discourses exist within Discourses and that they are intricately interlinked. The stance taken in analysing the classroom data was that the classroom is a site where discourse consists of contents, as well as functions and effects (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 6), in the particular context: discourse is a 'situated social practice' (Christie, 2002: 9).

With respect to the literacy practices: The definition of the term 'literacy practices' that was used to drive my analysis of the literacy-related activities is the same as that used by Banda (2003: 117), Barton (2001), Bloome *et al.* (2005: 5), Hamilton (2006) and Street (2003b: 81). According to them, 'literacy practices' refer to literacy events ("any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print plays a role" - Heath, 1983: 386), the values, attitudes, feelings and relationships associated with using written texts, as well as the social and cultural context that determine the choices that people make about their practices and the meanings surrounding these choices. I utilise the term 'literacy practices' to refer to

classroom events which include any contact with print, while bearing in mind the general cultural ways of utilising these events in particular situations.

Procedures used to analyse the data from classroom observations

Following Hatch (2002: 152ff), the typology of activities enumerated from the Observation Schedule (Ch4.4.5, Tables 8 & 9) was utilised to create a start list of descriptive pattern codes prior to data analysis:

- 1) I analysed the transcripts from the audio and video recordings to identify moments of exposure to and teaching of oral English and literacy and categorised them under the typology of activities;
- 2) I used the series of questions found in the Observation Schedule to categorise the data into different sets;
- 3) The informal interviews, which took place over the year and were kept as field notes, were used to analyse and interpret the findings;
- 4) The weekly plans and the daily notes of PSA teachers were also consulted (1) for triangulation, and (2) to consider the relationship between the intended curriculum and the attained curriculum (Ch3.6.4).

4.4.6.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with teachers

Data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were kept as a word document and reference was made to them during data analysis.

Structured interviews with teachers and parents

Simple descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were computed for the limited-choice questionnaire items. Open-ended questions were inductively coded (Hatch, 2002: 161ff). Any extra comments made by teachers and parents, collected in a word document, were also submitted to inductive analysis to find general patterns emerging (Refer to **Appendix L.5, Tables (20) and (22) and Appendix N.2, N.3**).

4.4.6.3 Test Results

Learners

Using the guidelines provided by Field (2005), the data were input on SPSS. Statistical calculations relevant for data interpretation were computed. The **paired samples t-test** was used to assess the progress made by PSA children in oral English and literacy over their final preschool year.

Teachers

While the teachers were willing to submit themselves to the oral English assessment, they were reluctant to have a stranger carry out the test. They were, however, agreeable to having me run the test with them and tape recording it. The tape recorder was then given to a colleague, who is an experienced oral English assessor at SC level in Mauritius. The assessment was run during the first week of November 2005. The criteria for assessment and the assessment results are in **Appendix K**: Candidate A=T2; Candidate B=T1; Candidate C=T3). Although the assessment gives a general idea of the teachers' oral English proficiency, the limitation of running such a test with PSA teachers is that they had not had such a test before, and thus had no preparation, training or technique to do the test.

4.5 Phase 3: The quasi-experiment (Oral English Intervention Programme)

4.5.1 Rationale

The research for this part of this thesis can best be described as a quasi-experimental research project, and it was run parallel to **Phase 2** of the main study. Since the pilot study had indicated that the oral English component of the 'Emergent Literacy' construct was particularly problematic in Mauritian preschools, the rationale underlying the planned intervention programme was the need to implement an alternative oral English programme at pre-primary level. This actual trial of a programme helped validate the recommendations made at the end of the thesis. The comparison of the test results obtained from the observed group (PSA) and the test group (PSB) revealed the potential linguistic benefits (and potential collateral benefits) of a modified oral English programme at preschool level.

4.5.2 Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical foundations underlying the OEIP reflect the research on the most appropriate teaching methodology for young second/foreign language learners – the use of TPR (Asher, 1967). Asher's TPR has been described as a comprehension-based approach, which is appropriate for the initial stages of Second Language Acquisition/Learning. Although TPR was initially used with adult second language learners, I have chosen to use TPR with the child language learners because of its appropriateness for their young age and cognitive level: it provides comprehensible input, it respects beginner learners' silent period and does not expect learner output, it focuses on relevant content rather than on grammar and form, it uses physical action, repetition and scaffolding. Insights from effective language teaching approaches for young children were also used (Ch3.6.1 – 3.6.2).

The OEIP was also designed to include enriched vocabulary sessions in the light of the research indicating that vocabulary is one of the predictors of reading (Carlo *et al.*, 2004; Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Garcia, 1991; Verhoeven, 1990). According to Carrell & Grabe (2002), readers must be familiar with a minimum of 95% of the vocabulary in the text for comprehension to occur, while Carlisle & Beeman (2000) found that primary-level Spanish-English bilingual children's vocabulary knowledge predicts reading comprehension in English and Spanish. Similarly, Boulware-Gooden *et al.* (2007: 70) claim that "comprehension is the reason for reading, and vocabulary plays a significant role in comprehension," and Kieffer & Lesaux (2007: 136) mention that vocabulary and reading have a reciprocal relationship for native speakers as well as English language learners (Proctor *et al.*, 2005). August & Hakuta's (1997: 56) review of a number of studies on the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading for English language learners indicates that English vocabulary is a primary determinant for second language readers. Although they concede that there is controversy about the level of second language proficiency needed to support second language reading, they find general positive correlations between second language oral proficiency and second language reading, especially at higher levels. They suggest that foreign language type literacy instruction may rely less on oral language as a route to literacy development than

those **acquiring initial literacy skills** in the second language, as is the case of Mauritian children.

Since vocabulary is one of the pillars of reading for meaning, vocabulary development was one of the cornerstones of the OEIP. The whole words/key words approach (Cameron, 2001: 148), the aim of which is to make children recognise the written form of the word through continued visualisation of the word, was adapted to the preschool context. I used flashcards, songs and stories to make children familiar with English words (in their oral form). This approach provided the opportunity to say English words to PSB children repeatedly, using the visual support, until they understood and remembered them. This approach aligns itself with (1) Krashen's (1996a) concept of 'narrow listening', which aims to provide a great deal of comprehensible input through repeated listening, and (2) Stoicovy (2004), who relates the benefits of numerous retellings, hearing and reading of stories for SLL to reinforce their language learning (Arnold & Colburn, 2005; Cambourne, 1988). I used a structured and systematic approach to oral English teaching in which the Brunerian principles of scaffolding were employed (Bruner, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1999; Wood *et al.*, 1976).

4.5.3 Aims and objectives of the OEIP

In line with the 2003PPG (pg.40), which states that preschool children will be taught some English daily, the aim of the OEIP was to concentrate on a meaningful exposure to oral English that would lead to understanding the basic words related to the themes done over the year in most preschools.

4.5.4 PSB subjects

4.5.4.1 Children

From the pilot study, PSB was identified to participate in Phase 3 for reasons mentioned in Ch4.2. Similarly to PSA teachers, PSB teachers were asked, in October 2004, to identify a group of subjects who could participate in the main 2005 study. The teachers used the same selection criteria used for the PSA children (Ch4.4.2) to select the subjects

from PSB. 15 children (6 male, 9 female) were identified, they had a mean age of 4.4 years in October 2004.

4.5.4.2 Parents

Once again, as for the parents in PSA, at the end of year party (October 2004), parents in PSB were informed of the study and they showed interest in being part of it. Data (through structured phone interviews) were also collected from parents of PSB children in November 2005, so as to consider the literate identities of the children as well as to ensure the comparability of the children from PSB with the children from PSA. Refer to **Appendix L: L.1 & L.2** for demographic details of PSB parents and evidence of the comparability of PSA and PSB children.

4.5.5 My status in PSB

My status in PSB was that of a complete participant (Chilisa & Preece, 2005: 155): I personally carried out the OEIP. However, measures were taken to optimise credibility and trustworthiness in the running of the OEIP and the assessment of PSB children:

- Ms Ballgobin was asked to come in once in the first term and second term to attend a session;
- My husband came to video-record me once a week - a random selection of the videos was viewed by Ms Ballgobin for her to validate the implementation of the OEIP;
- A log book was kept detailing the daily activities.

4.5.6 Contents of the OEIP

The typology of activities used in PSB followed the guidelines of the 2003PPG and included:

- Introducing children to new vocabulary;
- Story-telling;
- Using English for routines (having breakfast, going to the toilet, washing hands, going out to play), simple commands, simple conversation.

However, as mentioned above, TPR was the main language teaching approach.

4.5.7 Limitations of the OEIP

- 1) The limitation of the OEIP was that it focused exclusively on enhancing the children's oral English skills, and not on their decoding and print skills. Designing and implementing an intervention programme that would cover both oral English and decoding skills would have been impractical because it would have required the teachers to make arrangements to accommodate my presence for longer than 15-20 minutes daily. This would have affected their daily planning and their daily work;
- 2) For the sake of comparison, it would have been methodologically sounder if I had chosen the two groups of children from the same preschool. However, this was not possible for two main reasons:
 - **A practical reason:** There are approximately 25 final year preschoolers in all government preschools and it is improbable that all of them meet the criteria set for the selection of test subjects, so as to be split into two large enough groups;
 - **An ethical reason:** It would be unethical for me to observe teachers in one preschool, choose some of their own students for the OEIP, and eventually compare my teaching methodology with theirs through the children's performance. Since Mauritius is a small island characterised by competition, and since research does not form part of the culture, such an approach (which would have been methodologically more watertight) would have posed serious ethical problems. This would have made my status vis-à-vis the teachers problematical, thus limiting my chances of retrieving reliable data from observations and interviews. Furthermore, such an approach would have probably involved data corruption, as teachers would have heard, known and seen, themselves and through their students, what was being done in the OEIP. This might have affected their own language teaching practices. For these reasons, I carried out the quasi-experimental design in a preschool other than PSA, but similar to PSA.

4.5.8 Data collection procedures for Phase 3

4.5.8.1 Test administration

The pre-test and post-test were administered in the same way as for PSA children (Ch4.4.5).

4.5.8.2 Structured phone interviews with parents

Structured phone interviews with the parents of PSB children were carried out. The aim of the interviews was to confirm the comparability of the two groups, as well as to investigate into the literacy practices of the families of PSB children.

4.5.9 Data analysis procedures for Phase 3

4.5.9.1 Test

Using the guidelines provided by Field (2005), the data were input on SPSS. Statistical calculations relevant for data interpretation were computed. The **paired samples t-test** was used to assess the progress made by PSB children in oral English and literacy over their final preschool year. The **independent samples t-test** was used to compare PSA and PSB children's performance (1) on the pre-test to assess their comparability, and (2) on the post-test to compare the relative progress made by the two groups over their final preschool year. Test results are discussed in Ch9.

4.5.9.2 Structured phone interviews

These were analysed in the same way as described for PSA children (Ch4.4.6). The analysis of this data is included in Ch8.

4.6 Time-line for the study

Data to address the different research questions were sought at different times so as to minimise data corruption. Parents were interviewed at the end of the year so as to reduce the risk of the interview questions influencing their language and literacy behaviours at home during the year of observation. Moreover, different types of data were sought simultaneously on different sites. For example, while the classroom observations were carried out in PSA, semi-structured interviews were carried out with expert informants

who would not influence the classroom observations. Finally, since investigating the relationship between policy and practice is to a certain extent a political endeavour, some key informants were interviewed at the very end of the data collection. Although the limitation of this tactic is that some of the information might have helped in the design, observation and analysis, I did not want to run the risk of negatively influencing my access to the sites of data collection.

Table 10: Time-lines for the study

PILOT STUDY	
April – September 2004:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploratory pilot study in 6 government pre-primary schools
MAIN STUDY	
April – November 2004:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Document analysis
October 2004:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing PSA and PSB • Identifying the subjects for the main study
November-December 2004:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing the test to assess the children
Beginning of January 2005:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with key informants, who peer-reviewed the test • Pilot testing and refining the children's assessment
End of January 2005:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-testing the subjects from PSA and PSB
February 2005 - September 2005:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSA: 'Observer as participant', once a week; semi-structured interviews with teachers. • PSB: Quasi-experimental design/complete participant
End of September 2005 - Beginning October 2005:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Testing the subjects from PSA and PSB • Structured post-observation interviews with PSA teachers
October 2005-December 2005:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured phone interviews with parents of subjects from PSA and PSB
Throughout data collection period:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with expert informants
January 2006 – September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysing and interpreting the data • Editing drafts in relation to supervisors' comments and suggestions

4.7 Plan of the rest of the thesis

Table 11 summarises the questions that are addressed in the rest of this thesis.

Table 11: Sub-research questions and related research method

	Data collection methods	Chapter
<p>➤ Curricula</p> <p>Regarding oral English and pre-reading/writing,</p> <p>SRQ(i): What is contained in the preschool curricula and in the teacher training manuals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document analysis • Interview of key informants 	5
<p>➤ Teachers</p> <p>With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to oral English,</p> <p>SRQ(ii): What are teachers' pedagogical practices?</p> <p>SRQ(iii): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training and English language proficiency?</p> <p>With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to pre-reading/writing,</p> <p>SRQ(iv): What are teachers' literacy practices?</p> <p>SRQ(v): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training access to materials and their own literacy practices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observation • Document analysis • Interview with teachers • Assessment for teachers 	6
<p>➤ Learners</p> <p>Regarding preschoolers' home experiences,</p> <p>SRQ(vi): What constitutes their language background?</p> <p>SRQ(vii): To what extent are they exposed to English in the home?</p> <p>SRQ(viii): To what kinds of literacy experiences are they exposed?</p> <p>SRQ(ix): What are parents' beliefs and expectations, when it comes to doing English and pre-reading/writing in the preschool?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent questionnaire/interview 	7
		8

<p>➤ Learning outcomes</p> <p>SRQ(x): How much English do preschoolers learn in their final preschool year?</p> <p>SRQ(xi): How familiar are they with pre-reading/writing conventions?</p> <p>SRQ(xii): What would be the learning outcomes if an alternative approach to implementing the oral English aspect of the current preschool curriculum were used?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test • Test • Test 	<p>9</p>
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4.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described the three phases of the research design as it is planned for the rest of the study. It has also presented the main elements of the research design and methodology, specifying the research approach, the data collection procedures and the data analysis procedures that will be used. Chapters 5 to 9 will present and analyse the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

Official documents

Document analysis and interviews with expert/key informants

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first phase of my main study (Ch4.3). It focuses on the main official documents and aims to address **SRQ (i)**, set in the introduction:

Regarding oral English and pre-reading/writing,

SRQ (i): What is contained in the preschool curricula and in the teacher training manuals?

In this chapter, I use the theory reviewed in Ch3, and the approach described in Ch4.3, to analyse and interpret the main policy documents: the 1997PPG, the 2003PPG and the teacher training manuals. This document analysis is supplemented with data from interviews of expert and key informants.

5.2 Sifting through the data

5.2.1 Data collection methods

The main data collection techniques for this chapter are:

- Document analyses of the following official documents:
 - The 1997PPG;
 - The 2003PPG;
 - Teacher training manuals (TTM) for:
 - *Teacher Proficiency for Preschool Teachers*
 - *Teacher's Certificate of Proficiency*

- Semi-structured interviews with **expert informants**:
 - Assoc. Prof. Maudho: He was the Programme Director (ECD) and the co-ordinator for the 2003PPG; he was Head of the School of Education at the Mauritius Institute of Education in 2005;
 - Mr Reeda: He was involved in the 1980s non-accredited teacher training run by the then Pre-Primary Unit (PPU) and participated in the writing up of the 2003PPG. He was the Regional Director for Zone 4 at the time the data for this thesis were being collected;
 - Mrs Sylvette-Paris: She was also involved in the 1980s non-accredited teacher training (PPU) and participated in the writing up of the 2003PPG. She is still involved in teacher training on the accredited teacher-training programme. At the time data were collected for this thesis, she was responsible of the NGO - BETHLEEM.

Following Crawford (2003), the key informants were invited to comment on what they felt the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the above-named documents are. Given the open-ended nature of the SWOT analysis, respondents were at liberty to express themselves on the issues they found important and relevant;

- Semi-structured interviews with **key informants**: PSA teachers (also, the preschool teachers from the pilot study) were interviewed. The post-observation interviews with PSA teachers contained questions on teachers' appreciation of the language policy, the teacher training course, and their understanding of 'emergent literacy'.

5.2.2 Procedures for data analysis

The data were analysed in 2 main ways:

- 1) Using the informal approach described in Ch4.3, the documents were read as many times as necessary:
 - I focused on the contents of the documents, concentrating on the ideas that they put across;

- I bore in mind the chronology of the publication of the various documents, as well as the social context of their preparation and publication (**Appendix E.1, Table (5)**);
 - I utilised the theoretical underpinnings described in Ch3.4 - 3.6 as the lens through which I read the documents;
 - I remained sensitive to the international educational context, where (preschool) curricula have been produced in the past decade (refer to Ch2.3, where reference is made to the Singapore and Hong Kong preschool curricula, and Ch3.7.2, which deals with the *British National Literacy Strategy*);
- 2) Document analyses were supplemented with the data from the interviews with expert informants and key informants.

5.3 Document analysis

5.3.1 1997PPG

In this sub-section, I analyse the 1997PPG and argue that it is not sensitive enough to the challenges and constraints engendered by the local sociolinguistic context, where Kreol is the home language of most children, French is a second language to which children are exposed through the media, and English is foreign language (refer to Ch2.4.1).

One of the salient features of the 1997PPG is that it is a subject-based curriculum: it devotes a whole section to languages, which refers specifically to English and French, but excludes the local *lingua franca*. In fact, the 'Introduction to Language' section of the 1997PPG states that, "Pre-primary schooling [...] is the place where the child will **formally** learn two languages, namely English and French" (p.12) [*my emphasis*]. First, such a statement (unconsciously) seems to support a hierarchisation of languages. While the European languages are given prominence by being explicitly named, the home language is mentioned only in the 4th paragraph of the *Introduction* in such terms as, "Proficiency in a new language will be facilitated if development in the home language is continued in early childhood" (1997PPG: 12). The home language is thus relegated to a

secondary position by not being named at all.⁴⁴ Secondly, the use of the term “formally” is problematical with respect to teaching English and French since the term is in contradiction with the very spirit of preschool education, which emphasises the importance of “play” as explicitly mentioned in the 1997PPG (pg. 8).

Having specifically referred to English in the *Introduction*, the 1997PPG moves on to specify the aims of the English programme, which are “to build a communicative vocabulary with correct pronunciation ...to acquire the skills of listening and comprehension in English...[to provide] opportunities to practise them...” (p.14). Such ambitious aims lead me to argue that the curriculum fails to consider the limited social use made of English in Mauritius and the level of English language proficiency of teachers and learners. For instance, on the issue of “correct pronunciation”, it is mentioned that children who learn English well “will not speak with an accent” (1997PPG: 16). Since there are hardly any native speakers of English in Mauritius, it is expected that most Mauritian teachers and learners will speak with a non-native (Mauritan) accent irrespective of the age at which they are introduced to English, unless audio-visual materials are used in class to expose learners to a certain accent. In any case, the issue of “speaking with an accent” is part of a colonial discourse that values certain accents. With the emergence of new Englishes, a number of accents have appeared and are accepted so long as they are comprehensible and intelligible. As described in Ch2.4.1, since English is not used as a social language, the issue of what accent to adopt does not appear to be that problematic to Mauritians. However, RP seems to be the perceived prestigious accent because of our historical link with Britain and because we still take British exams. At this point, it might be interesting to consider a recent programme, THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills), conceived in England by Alan Davies and exported to countries like South Africa. This programme features a Phoneme Machine that uses the International Phonetic Alphabet and moving

⁴⁴ In South Africa, the term ‘home language’ has also been used in policy documents because the term ‘mother tongue’ is seen as problematical in view of local realities. Although Mauritian curriculum writers might have chosen the word ‘home language’ in order to avoid the use of ‘mother tongue’, the choice of either term is less contentious in Mauritius because although Mauritius is multilingual, it is far less so than South Africa. As shown in the census data, **Appendix B, Table (1)**, most people speak Kreol as a home language. Our multilingual situation and local questions of identity are arguably less complex and thorny than the case might be in South Africa.

human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of sounds to language learners. Since this machine was conceived as part of a reading and spelling programme, the underlying assumption of this machine seems to be that pronunciation can help writing. One example in Mauritius is the initial sound of 'the' and 'this' (voiced dental fricative) is often pronounced [z]. This indicates that pronunciation might affect speaking and reading in English.

The 1997PPG also says that the teacher "should" have a good knowledge of English to role model "the proper use of English" (1997PPG: 14). By taking such a definitive stance, it disregards the possibility, albeit probability, that local preschool teachers do not have such knowledge, fluency and accuracy in English. The 1997PPG also expects preschool teachers to "provide an environment which enables children to use language [English] as often as possible in a variety of situations," through "stories, poems, small group discussions, visits, music movement, songs, rhymes, dressing up." (1997PPG: 16). While such an activity as oral group discussion would require a high level of language proficiency and well-developed cognitive skills on the teachers' and learners' part, such activities as stories, poems, songs and rhymes would be more to the level of the teachers and learners, so long as teachers are trained to use such activities for foreign language learners. As for story reading, the shared book concept is described as "an excellent way of introducing second language learners to English" (1997PPG: 17) and teachers are expected to immerse children in "good literature". Although the benefits of shared reading are indisputable for native speakers and language learners (Ch3.7.2), the use of reading in a language children are unfamiliar with requires the use of appropriate (rather than "good") literature. The characteristics of appropriate books in a context like Mauritius would be books with repetitive and accessible language, and preschool teachers trained to read in languages other than the L1 in preschool classrooms. It does not seem apparent, from my observations during the pilot study or the main study, that classroom libraries in preschools contain the type of books that would encourage meaningful book reading.

Finally, a comparative analysis of the English and French programmes reveals that despite the different status, role, place and use of English and French in the Mauritian educational system (Ch2.4.1), both language programmes have similar aims and suggest similar language teaching approaches, methodology, and activities. To me, this is clear enough evidence to suggest that the curriculum writers have overlooked the particularities of the local sociolinguistic context and by extension, the language teaching context. Hence they have failed to consider the pedagogical implications of the distinction between second language teaching and foreign language teaching (refer to Ch3.6.1).

5.3.2 2003PPG

Unlike the 1997PPG, which is a subject-based curriculum, the 2003PPG takes a holistic and thematic approach with 'Language and Communication' and 'Reading-Writing' being among the eight foundation areas of learning (2003PPG: 36). The other six areas of learning are: *Drawing, Logical Thinking and Mathematics Literacy, Science, Creative Arts, Music, Nutrition and Health*.

Like the 1997PPG, the generic terms 'language' and 'home language' are constantly mentioned in the more recent preschool curriculum: "language and communication" (pg. 1); "language of the environment", "the languages commonly used during primary schooling" (p. 8); "language(s) other than the child's mother tongue" (p. 38); children should have "access to books showing different languages and culture"; children should "value their own cultural and linguistic background, value the cultural and linguistic background of others, appreciate different language greetings" (pg. 60); children should "Use language to recall and recount experiences" (p. 19). However, it is interesting to note that there is no reference made to any language(s) in particular. Conversely, specific mention is made of English:

Since English is the official language throughout the education system, and English is the medium of instruction at a higher level of primary school, it is only logical that through songs or poetry, a child will learn some English daily in relation to the theme being worked on (p. 40)⁴⁵

Moreover, explicit reference is made of the teaching of English:

Exposure through songs, poems, nursery rhymes, short stories, simple commands, word exposure, language(s) other than the child's mother tongue (p. 38)

Children understand whole sentences in English if mime, action and puppet shows are used while reciting poems or singing. (p. 43)

In an interview, Maudho (2006, p.c.) suggests that the order in which the languages are mentioned in the 2003PPG was carefully thought through. While “home language” and “language of the environment” are mentioned throughout the document, English is mentioned two-thirds way into the document (while French is not named at all). It seems to me that the curriculum writers remained as politically correct as possible in their treatment of languages in the 2003PPG, in the face of the serious criticism aimed at the 1997PPG. They thus emphasise the home language first, since it had been marginalised in the 1997PPG. Then they mention English, by virtue of its quasi-official status and its predominant role in education, but they mention it late enough because they want to put across the idea that English should not take over the home language in the preschool. Finally, they do not name French or any of the oriental languages because these languages are associated with ethnic groups (Ch2.4.1).

With respect to **‘Reading and Writing’**, the 2003PPG advises a “reading readiness approach” (2003PPG: 41) to reading and a “whole language approach” to writing (2003PPG: 39). While the reading readiness approach takes a bottom-up approach, emphasising children’s “neurological development, cognitive awareness, social maturity, and language skills” and discrete skills through “the sounding of letters and the forming of words from letters” (2003PPG: 41), the whole language approach takes a top-down

⁴⁵ Explicit mention is made of English in a section on ‘Story reading’ (p. 40, Refer to **Appendix G**), which states that story reading will lead to “habitual readers and independent learners” (p.40). This implies that teachers are expected to read to children in English, as well as in other languages. It is interesting to note that the same words are found in the TT Manual: P8: 105.

approach, emphasising the importance of immersing children in meaningful printed texts as a route to early literacy development. For instance, teachers are expected to write down exactly what their students say on their drawings - "If children say what is taking place in the drawing, and this is written under their drawing, in their own precise words, (without being subjected to an approximate translation by the educator), then the purpose of motivation for writing will have been achieved" (2003PPG: 41) - a characteristic of the 'language experience approach' (see Ch3.6.3). Furthermore, the section emphasises that if surrounded by print, children will automatically learn their letters, but then conversely states that, "Reading and Writing have to be learnt" (p.41). It seems to me that the lack of clarity about the approach to literacy instruction to be taken in the Mauritian preschool context is intricately linked with the problematic choice of approach to literacy instruction (refer to Ch3.6.3). This is made more difficult by the thorny issue of the language in which Mauritian children will be made literate, that is, a foreign language rather than their L1.

5.3.3 Accredited teacher training courses

Johnson (1989: 10) says that a teacher-training programme is "a curriculum within a curriculum, embedded at the point of programme implementation". In the context where teacher training is one step towards curriculum implementation (Ch3.6.4), this section focuses on the teacher training manuals of the accredited teacher training courses. It is interesting to note that the TTM offer definitions of 'curriculum', which vacillate between the broad and the narrow definition of curriculum. While in one teacher training manual, 'pre-school curriculum' is used to encompass all the interactions, experiences and routines that are part of each child's day" (P8: 10), in another it is "all that happens to a child during the course of a day in a **formal** caring/learning environment" (C2: 43) [*my emphasis*].

In this thesis, I have taken the narrower view of curriculum and have focused on the preschool classroom. In the coming section, which is driven by my research interest and the literature review, I focus on the following as they are dealt with in the TTM: language and literacy, reading & writing, bilingualism and storybook reading.

5.3.3.1 Language and literacy

In the 'Language Arts and Literacy Issues' section of the *Certificate of Proficiency* (P4: 12-31), 'literacy' is variously defined as (1) the understanding of the cultural context in which one lives, (2) the basic academic skills of reading, writing and doing mathematics, and (3) knowing to read and write and understanding the uses of written language. An 'emergent literacy' approach (P4: 15) to literacy is also advocated and this approach emphasises the importance of:

- 1) An awareness of print: print is related to oral language, it is a form of communication as well as a source of enjoyment and information (P4: 20) (as mentioned in Ch3.4);
- 2) Oral language proficiency: the TTM explicitly state that "oral language is the basis of all literacy" (P4: 7), that "The development of oral language is fundamental to the language arts programme ...oral speaking activities...also favour the emergence of written communication" (P4: 9), that "unless the child has a good background and grasp of oral language skills he/she will find the written word difficult to cope with" (P4: 13), that "printed language is related to oral language" (P4: 20) and that "oral language is the foundation upon which reading and writing are built up" (P4: 20). These claims about the essential contribution of oral language proficiency as a precursor to meaningful reading find support in the literature on EL (as shown in Ch3.4). However, the vague term 'oral language' is repeatedly used and this is problematic in the local context. Since Mauritian children do not learn to read in their L1 (language which they would be proficient in), but rather in their L2 (French) and a FL (English), it appears to me that the fundamental question remains: in what language(s) do Mauritian children require oral proficiency in order to smoothly enter the world of literacy? The inability, or reluctance of the manual writers, to address this fundamental and delicate question might be related to the fact that emergent and early literacy experiences in an L2/FL in non-European countries are under-researched and documented.

5.3.3.2 Reading and writing

The contents of this sub-section reiterate what is found in the 2003PPG; 2003PPG: 36-56 is an almost exact copy of P8: 99-121, the former differs in that it does not have the tasks

for teachers that are inserted in the TTM (refer to Ch5.3.2). In the TTM, a multilingual print rich setting is also mentioned: “If a second language is being learned, displays should include that language. Where children in class have a language other than French, English or Creole, that too should be displayed” (P8: 56). As in the 2003PPG, the TTM propose the use of the “whole language approach” (P8: 104; C4: 18-22), within which is the “language experience approach” (C4: 21).

5.3.3.3 Bilingualism

The TTM devote a whole booklet (C3) to a child’s first language development. This section borrows heavily from the research on the development of English as a first language. Given the near absence of research on first language acquisition of Kreol (except for Adone, 1994), this literature on monolingual first language acquisition and development is relevant to the extent that indeed Mauritian children are generally initially monolingual speakers of Kreol, as is made fairly clear from the 2000 Population and Language Census (refer to **Appendix B**).

Conversely, the local multilingual context is acknowledged in a shorter appended section, entitled ‘Other factors affecting early childhood development’, which contains a brief section on ‘Bilingualism’ (C4: 40-45). The section on ‘Bilingualism’ is introduced in such confusing terms as: “with **second language learning** in some cultures there is a **dominant language** which is the ‘**official**’ language and which also is the **language of the educational institutions**” (C4: 41) [my emphasis]. As discussed in Ch2.4.1, French is the *de facto* second language in Mauritius and it is the dominant language to the extent that it is used socially and it is extensively used in the written and the spoken media. On the other hand, English is the dominant language by virtue of its *de facto* status as official language and predominant language of education. Since such terms as “dominant” and “second language” are slippery and fluid terms in the local context, the use of such terms in official educational documents is problematical. It seems to me that the textbook writers do not have clearly set out the roles and functions of the different languages in the multilingual context, and if they do, they do not clearly and unambiguously state them out in the official documents.

It is under this section on 'Bilingualism' that **foreign language teaching** is mentioned in the teacher training manuals (Refer to **Appendix G: P3: 27, C4: 41; C4: 43**). However, it is noted that the term FL is systematically used interchangeably with the term 'second language'. Although this lack of distinction between second and foreign language teaching can also be found in some of the literature on the topic (Celce-Murcia, 2001), I would argue that it is problematical in that it fails to emphasise the context of language teaching. Since the social context for language teaching does not provide comprehensible input in English, while it does for French (as is the case in Mauritius), this should affect teacher's expectations and pedagogical practices. For instance, while teachers can expect children's French language learning to be supported by the media, they cannot expect the same for English. Hence, English language teachers might need to expose Mauritian learners to more oral and aural input in the English language classroom. This is an avenue that the TTM do not explore at all; rather they take the more simplistic approach of confounding second language learning/teaching with foreign language learning/teaching.

The other problem with the **foreign language teaching** rubric is that it makes some claims that are still not substantiated by empirical research. One such example is on the effect of age for second/foreign language acquisition/learning. The TTM claim that "language educators consider that the earlier a child learns to speak and read in his/her second language the more effective is the language learning" (P3: 27), while research about the optimal age for enhanced S/F language and literacy learning is still complex and inconclusive (Hakuta, 2001; Singleton, 2005). Moreover, inconsistencies are noted in the TTM. For instance, whereas P3: 27 points out the desirability of 'learning' (Ch3.6.2) an SL early, C4: 41 explains some of the learning problems created by a too early formal teaching of a S/F language. Similarly, although the bilingual approach to language teaching is claimed as the best approach to language teaching, there is no clarification as to the meaning of the 'bilingual approach' in the local context. The 'bilingual approach' discourse clearly reiterates the discourse of the 1998 Action Plan, which proposed a blue print of a preschool curriculum and which mentioned a "full bilingual programme" (pg.113) (Ch2.4.8, **Appendix C.2**), without being explicit about the

meaning and implications of the term used or the model referred to. Finally and more critically, no mention is made of possible language teaching methods for introducing an S/FL to preschoolers.

In sum, I am of the opinion that the section on 'Bilingualism' does not reflect the Mauritian sociolinguistic context. Hence, it fails to provide guidelines to teachers who are expected to introduce children to various languages, which have different domains of use, roles and functions in Mauritius.

5.3.3.4 Storybook reading

The TTM make the distinction between story telling and story reading (C3). They also suggest that teachers read Big Books to preschoolers (P8: 38) and stress that daily storybook reading is crucial for developing language (vocabulary) skills, as well as for building interest in reading. The tone adopted is a fairly prescriptive tone, telling preschool teachers what they should do in theory. However, the TTM do not address the central question about the language of the books, and the kinds of books that could be used in order to initiate children to reading and to English through reading. I refer to the discussion on shared reading in Ch 3.7.2 and Ch5.3.1.

5.4 Teachers' voices

In this sub-section, I give voice to the teachers by considering their reactions to the language policy, the 2003PPG, the accredited MIE/MCA teacher training courses and their understanding of emergent literacy. The data here referred to were collected from the key informants of main 2005 study - T1, T2, T3, as well as the 15 teachers whom I collected data from in the pilot study.

5.4.1 Language policy

For the informants, the language policy at pre-primary level encourages the use of the mother tongue, with a smooth introduction to French and English. They also believe that children should be socialised in their L1, before being introduced to French and English.

5.4.2 The 2003PPG

The informants indicated little awareness of the existence of the 2003PPG. For their day-to-day activities, they claimed to rely mainly on the teacher training they had received, more specifically on the practical knowledge they had acquired when they had followed teacher training course, especially the PPU course, which was a 400-contact hour, face-to-face course offered in the late 1980s, and the blue-print/yearly plan which is available in all preschools and which they use to plan their year's work (**Appendix M: M.1**).

5.4.3 The teacher training programme

With respect to the two accredited teacher training programmes, preschool teachers found them too theoretical and not practical enough. They complained about the distance delivery mode, which limited face-to-face interaction with tutors. According to teachers, the language of the TTM was also difficult and technical, and not always adapted to their level (refer to **Appendix N: N.1**). Such a language came in the way of comprehension especially for teachers having a language or a concept comprehension problem. Teachers also said that little information was provided about methods for and approaches to teaching English to young learners in Mauritius⁴⁶ and they expressed their preference for the earlier (non-accredited) course, provided by the Pre-Primary Unit (PPU). This course was a hands-on course with practitioners coming in to help them develop certain skills (artistic, musical, language) in workshops. Teachers found it easier to implement innovations from practical experience of them, rather than from theoretical knowledge of them.

The above views on the teacher training courses are supported by the views of two expert informants:

- Mr. Reeda (2006, p.c.) thinks that the distance mode is inappropriate for preschool teachers whose reading and writing competencies in English are limited;

⁴⁶ T1, T3, and 8 (of the 11 teachers who responded to the question in the pilot) were of this view. T2 says that "some techniques are suggested in the book, but I do not really remember."

- Ms Paris-Davy (2006, p.c.) says that it is hard for preschool teachers to understand the teacher manuals and to put theory into practice.

According to ADEA (2003) and the SACMEQ reports, the education of preschool teachers in most sub-Saharan Africa can be criticised for being overly academic and theoretical in nature, ineffective and costly. Moreover, according to Fukkink & Lont (in press), offering a course to many trainees and at different sites can be a problem. The lack of structure and the problem of delivery in the teacher-training curriculum can affect the learning potential of caregiver training. Teachers' assessment of their teacher training course and its impact has implications for the planning of future pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.

5.4.4 Emergent literacy

The focus of our study being on emergent literacy, and EL being part of the TTM, PSA teachers were asked to explain their understanding of EL in the post-observation interview. The responses indicate a basic understanding of the term, with emphasis on the activities related to EL, rather than a general understanding of the fundamentals of EL.

Question: What do you understand by EMERGENT LITERACY?

- T1: Look on a box and recopy the word - Red Cow. Child surrounded by writing in class, must see words everywhere. See the words everyday until know how to write words.
- T2: Recognise words on posters; learn by what they see when they are used to seeing the words.
- T3: Book

Question: How do you put into practice your understanding of EMERGENT LITERACY in your daily/weekly activities?

- T2: Charts, write words on charts that we prepare.
- T3: A lot through drawings. It is pointless to ask the children to draw and not write.

5.5 Discussion

5.5.1 A preschool curriculum in the Mauritian context

In the early 1980s, the 1983 Glover Report suggested the need for a preschool curriculum, to address the problem of “disparity between the various types of pupils who enter the primary sector.” (pg.27). Although the report “did not wish at this point to use the word ‘curriculum’,” it was advising the preparation of official preschool guidelines. This hesitancy to use the term ‘curriculum’ can be understood in the historical context in which the report was written at the time of the preparation of a primary curriculum (Ch2.4.4). Nevertheless, the recommendation shows the committee’s *avant-garde* vision to use a preschool curriculum as a planned political intervention (Wood, 2004: 363), so as to positively influence the quality of preschool teaching.

Although it took some fifteen years for the recommendation of the 1983 Glover Report to be actualised, the preparation of the preschool curricula (1997 and 2003), commissioned and endorsed by the Government indicated its will to acknowledge the importance of preschool education, and to standardise practices in this non-compulsory, largely non-governmental, sector.

In its conceptualisation, the 2003PPG (and the 1997PPG) claims to have an eclectic theoretical base (child-centred, activity-based, multicultural, multilingual). However, Ballgobin (2007, p.c.), who was actively involved in writing the TTM, says that there are important weaknesses in the theory of multilingualism that underlies the writing of the Mauritian preschool curricula. For instance, while the objective of language development is to expose the child to other languages, there is no indication as to what languages children should be exposed to, and no indication of the level(s) of proficiency they should reach. Similarly, while the objective of the 2003PPG is to introduce reading and writing, there is no information as to what literacy skills children should acquire as they finish the preschool cycle.

It seems that a more comprehensive theory of multilingualism would have meant a clearer set of goals and desired learning outcomes in the preschool curriculum. Such a

lack of precision is at odds with the spirit of outcomes-based education (which the 2003PPG claims to be – Ch2.4.8), which aims at achieving certain measurable results at the end of the learning process. By means of comparison, the South African RNCS (2002), which is also an outcomes-based curriculum, draws on Cummins' theory of additive multilingualism to inform its language policy (refer to my critique of the relevance of this theory to the South African educational context in Ch2.2.1). It contains three Language Learning Areas (home language, first additional language, second additional languages), which cover the 11 official languages. Furthermore, learning outcomes and assessment standards, which are written in simple and accessible language, provide teachers with guidelines about the aims, contents, and expected learning outcomes for each of the educational phases, including Reception Year. However, since the preschool sector is non-obligatory in Mauritius, one can understand why the articulation of precise learning outcomes might be perceived as problematical in the local preschool context.

5.5.2 From 2003PPG to the teacher training programme...

An analysis of the 2003PPG and the teacher training programme leads me to argue that there is unclear relationship between the preschool curriculum and teacher training.

First of all, teacher training preceded the curriculum (**Appendix E.1**). In effect, it may be that the teacher training Proficiency course was the piloting referred to in the 2003PPG (pg. v). Further, when the curriculum came out in December 2003, there was no large-scale in-service teacher-training programme. In fact, key informants (preschool teachers) were not quite aware of the 2003PPG (Ch5.4). Hence, there seems to be a bit of an anomaly in the chronology of events.

Secondly, there are some inconsistencies between the curriculum and the teacher training manuals. While the 2003PPG makes no mention of the EL approach, the TTM explicitly adhere to the EL framework. However, the TTM fail to provide the instructional implications of this approach in the complex linguistic context that Mauritius presents. In fact, PSA teachers' response, when asked to elaborate on their understanding of EL,

indicates a limited understanding of EL and its educational and pedagogical implications (Ch5.4). This is understood in the context where preschool teachers claimed that the TTM are too theoretical and do not help them in the classroom. Such reactions on the part of teachers to local teacher training courses find echoes in other parts of the world (IRA International Reports on Literacy Research, 2006: 135-137). For instance, in Hong Kong, teachers have requested the use of practical examples of literacy teaching and learning in teacher preparation and professional development programmes and more knowledge about Second Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics. In Nigeria, the teacher education programme has been reported as inadequate, and suggestions have been made for literacy education to be offered as a specialist course. In Oman, 80% of the respondents said that formal assistance in the area of literacy education is minimally provided to in-service teachers.

The role of teacher training is to mediate between the written curriculum and the taught curriculum in order to create an environment where optimal learning and teaching can take place. In the case of the Mauritian preschool, I have argued that the teacher training has not been successful in this playing this mediating role. This situation is not unique to Mauritius but seems to have occurred in other contexts too. For instance, if we consider South Africa's RNCS (2002), Kevvy (2006: 12) talks about "curriculum fatigue", arguing that the implementation and subsequent revision of a new outcomes-based curriculum has placed teachers under considerable pressure, a situation which has been worsened by inadequate in-service education and training. Schlebusch & Thobedi (2004: 46) have focused on English language learners in South Africa and have argued that some educators have not received advanced training on how to elevate the level of ESL teaching and learning with relevant strategies. As for the British *National Literacy Strategy*, Riley (2001: 49) has argued that the teacher training was insufficient, while Stainthorp (2002: 475) describes the teacher training of the 'Tips for teachers' style, with a lack of information on the theoretical underpinnings and rationale and no additional reading to enable teachers to read further. Furthermore, Crawford (2003: 73) says that teachers were not sufficiently trained to teach children with special educational needs (SEN) and that the training was insufficient compared to other projects such as the LIFT

project (Riley, 2001: 49-5) or the *Reading Recovery* project which includes a year of advanced training including theory and practice (Stainthorp, 2002: 483). Riley (2001: 48) also argues that teachers need in-depth understanding of the WHY? as well as of the WHAT? and HOW?.

5.5.3 Lack of clarity in the terms used in official documents

In this sub-section, I argue that the opacity in the terms used and the extensive use of technical linguistic jargon come in the way of clear understanding of the official document.

With respect to oral English and literacy, there is some opacity in the way the 2003PPG and TTM deal with the language issue. As described in Ch5.3.2, vague terms like “home language”, “language of the environment” and “dominant language” are used to avoid naming languages. Because of this lack of conceptual difference, language learning and teaching are dealt with more problematically in the documents. Ramdoyal (1982) proposed that the use of languages in pre-primary and primary education should not be prescriptive, and that the teacher should be allowed to use the language of the child for the child not to feel alienated. However, the shortcoming of such an approach is that teachers cannot operate with clear language teaching goals. It is interesting here to make a parallel with the 2000 British *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*. Ling-Yin’s (2007: 188) says that the rhetoric⁴⁷ of equal opportunity is embedded in the discourse of the document, but that the text is available in English only and that the minority languages are not named. Consequently, the ways in which children from immigrant and minority groups might develop their home language and how they might learn the language of the host country are unmentioned. It seems to me that much the same can be said of the 2003PPG, which in its discourse emphasises the home language(s), but which in practice remains a document that is available in English only, and a document that resists naming the home languages. However, the difference between the British case and the Mauritian case, and the irony, is that Britain is dealing

⁴⁷ Kelly (1994: 13) has criticised other educational documents in Britain of being “largely rhetoric.”

with its minority language groups, whereas Mauritius with its majority language group: the native speakers of Kreol (refer to census figures, **Appendix B, Table (1)**).

The extensive use of technical linguistic jargon can also be read as problematical. For instance, the terms ‘whole language approach’, ‘reading readiness’ and ‘emergent literacy’, which are borrowed from diverse theoretical perspectives, are used in the documents, failing to indicate the inter-relatedness among these terms in the local context. The use of the linguistic jargon detracts attention from the language issue in the multilingual setting. Another example of the use of technical jargon is found in the use of the term ‘bilingualism’. First, there has been controversy in the definition of the term (Bialystok 2001: 4-5; Cook, 1993 in Silva 2000; Romaine, 1989). Moreover, the literature has described various types of bilingualism exist (Hoffman 1991: 109): for instance, Skutnabb-Kangas (1984: 95ff) makes a distinction between natural and school bilingualism. Since most Mauritian children are exposed to at least three languages at home and at school, the term ‘bilingualism’ itself might be a misnomer here.

While this opacity of terms is evidence of the sensitivity and uneasiness caused by any mention of the language issue in Mauritius, it seems to me that the outcome of this is the inability of the 2003PPG to clearly articulate learning outcomes. It is interesting to note that one of the critiques of the South African Curriculum 2005 was the opacity of its language (Bloch, 2000a: 196). As a result, the RNCS (2002) has simplified its language in order to make it more accessible to teachers (Keevy, 2006).

5.5.4 From 1997PPG to 2003PPG/TTM onwards

Given that the 2003PPG was probably written in the context of the writing and rejection of the 1997PPG, as argued by the editorialist, A. Rajoo (as reported in *Le Militant*, 12 February 1999), a comparison between the two indicates that there has been a shift in approach and orientation.

The 1997PPG was written, bearing in mind the *de facto* LiEP and aiming to prepare children for the language situation awaiting them at primary level. In an interview

(2006, p.c.), Mrs Ida Coombes claimed that the 1997PPG was prepared to be in line with and to lead to primary school education.⁴⁸ Although this appears to have been a legitimate aim, it became a weakness in the local context because the 1997PPG does not strike a balance between the situation analysis and the needs analysis.⁴⁹ More importance was given to the perceived linguistic needs of the students as they enter primary education, and not enough to the sensitive political, social and linguistic context in which these perceived needs arise. The 1997PPG thus addressed the language issue within a 'language as problem' orientation (Ruiz, 1984, cited in Cummins 2000: 171).

Written in the context of the rejection of the 1997PPG, my reading of the 2003PPG is that it aims to legitimise and make official the use of the child's L1 in the preschool. The 2003PPG thus takes a 'language as right' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, in Cummins 2000: 171) orientation - which reflects the position of some of the writers of the 2003PPG. As mentioned in Ch2.4.8, the 2003PPG was written by a pool of contributors, including members of PLAYGROUP. PLAYGROUP (**Appendix E.2**) is closely associated with *Ledikasyon pu travayer*, and both overtly support Kreol as initial LoL and MoL. Moreover, PLAYGROUP was critical of the language policy of the 1997PPG, and was involved in the removal from circulation of the 1997PPG. However, the use of this orientation in the Mauritian context is problematical because 'linguistic human rights' (Skutnabb-Kangas & Philipson, 1997, cited in Stroud, 2001: 345) is one avenue towards greater public acknowledgment and political legitimacy of minority languages. In Mauritius, however, Kreol is neither a minority language, nor an endangered language. Therefore, it does not appear reasonable to see Kreol from a language rights perspective.

⁴⁸ Mrs. Coombes was the coordinator of the English section of the 1997PPG. In the interview she also said that the need for a pre-primary curriculum was felt because there was a total lack of guidelines for preschools, many of which had a 'day care' function. The task force working on the English section consisted of staff from the MIE, the MCA, and preschool teachers. The main aim of the curriculum was to show Mauritian teachers how to teach English through Kreol, using direct translation, songs, play and storybook reading. Mrs. Coombes expressed her concern about the level of English of preschool teachers in Mauritius, whom she claims are not proficient enough to be English language models for the learners.

⁴⁹ Berwick (1989: 53), Olivia (2001: 37) and Richards (2001: 37) emphasise the importance of situation and needs analyses as an important part of curriculum development. Richards (2001: 90) says that a curriculum is a social and political enterprise, which must remain sensitive to the situation/context in which it is produced. Further, Richards (2001: 53) defines "Needs analysis [as including] the study of perceived and present needs as well as potential and unrecognized needs". Berwick (1989: 55) distinguishes felt needs, which are those needs which learners have, from perceived needs, which are affected by the judgment of experts about the educational gaps in other people's experiences. Brindley (1989: 70) talks about objective needs, which are needs derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners, their language use in real-life, current language proficiency, and subjective needs are cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, the learner's personality, attitudes, wants, expectations, learning styles.

In any case, there is controversy around the issue of including and teaching languages in the curriculum on the premise of language rights. Referring to the South African experience, Heugh (1999: 309) argues that using the majority language in education for sentimental, ideological or ethical reasons will have little success. Similarly, Webb (2004: 151) argues that the MoI cannot be successfully based on considerations of human rights but on the question of empowerment.

The stand taken on the language issue in the two curricula indicates that the local stakeholders have not yet gone beyond considering languages as being at war (Calvet, 1987), and as being in simple dichotomic terms, problems or rights. They still fail to consider languages from a 'language as a resource' perspective, with linguistic diversity seen as a societal resource for the benefit of all groups (Cummins, 2000: 171; Heugh, 1999). Moreover, by over-focusing on the language issue, neither curriculum has considered the relationship between oral language and literacy in the local context. It thus seems to me that, in the context where the preschool is perceived as a preparation for primary education, the next step will be to see the languages of multilingual Mauritius as a resource, and to address the question of the relationship between oral proficiency and literacy development, for enhanced educational progress in the local preschool curriculum.

5.6 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I have used the literature review (Ch3.4 - 3.6), and the approach described in Ch4.3, to critically analyse the main educational documents that potentially inform preschool practices in Mauritius. I have also triangulated this document analysis with data gathered from teacher questionnaires/interviews and interviews with key informants.

In answer to **SRQ(i)**, this chapter argues that although mention is made of the importance of English in the local context and the importance of literacy, reading and writing in the preschool sector,

- The documents fail to emphasise the status of English as a foreign language, consequently they fail to provide teachers with the pedagogical approaches

appropriate to teach oral English and pre-reading/writing to Mauritian preschoolers;

- The technical jargon of the official documents may act as a barrier for teachers, hence adversely affecting their pedagogical practices;
- Curriculum writers conceptualise languages as problems or rights, instead of resources, therefore, they fall short of considering the relationship between oral language and pre-reading/writing in early literacy development;
- The desired learning outcomes are not clearly articulated, thus teachers lack precise guidelines as to what standards they are expected to meet.

Bearing in mind the critiques made in this chapter of the curricula and teacher training programmes, I will now move on to Phase 2 of my main study, where I will consider the strategies teachers use in **one** preschool to expose children to English (Ch6) and literacy practices (Ch7) in their classroom.

CHAPTER 6

Exposure to English in Preschool A

Classroom observations, document analysis and teacher interviews

6.1 Introduction

Having analysed what the main policy documents say about oral English and pre-reading/writing, I now move on to Phase 2 of my research (Ch4.4), which aims to probe into teacher practices in one observed preschool classroom (PSA). This chapter addresses **SRQ(ii)** and **SRQ(iii)**, as they appear in Ch1.8 and which I reiterate here:

With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to oral English,

SRQ(ii): What are teachers' pedagogical practices?

SRQ(iii): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training and English language proficiency?

Since the preschool (curriculum and teachers) has a crucial role in children's emergent literacy experiences (Ch3.7.2), my work focuses on PSA teachers and their teaching practices. Given that storybook reading is a literacy activity potentially developing both oral and decoding skills, I analyse it as such at the end of Ch7.

6.2 Sieving through the Data

6.2.1 Classroom observations

6.2.1.1 Collecting the data

As detailed in Ch4.4.5, Tables 8 & 9, the observation schedule was used to capture moments where students were exposed to oral English. Audio recordings and transcriptions of classroom discourse in which oral English was embedded were analysed. Video-recordings and transcriptions of classroom discourse in which oral

English was embedded, as well as teachers' body language and their use of visual aids, were also analysed.

6.2.1.2 Procedures for data analysis

Data analysis was carried out in various stages:

- 1) The transcribed data and field notes were read;
- 2) Each time English was used, the words and sentences were highlighted;
- 3) Since all the incidents where oral English was used or taught took place within the context of a change from another language into English, I used Auer's (1995: 116) working definition of code-alternation as "a relationship of contiguous juxtaposition of semiotic systems" and a hyperonym for Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir's (2003: 88) distinction between code-switching (an intersentential alteration of code) and code-mixing (an intrasentential change of code) to drive the data analysis. I also systematically noted down the context in which these oral English incidents were produced by italicising the whole event. This is in line with Auer's view (1995: 116) that the meaning of code-alternation depends on its "sequential environment," that is, the preceding and subsequent utterance(s);
- 4) The typology of activities derived from the observation schedule (Ch4.4.5, Table 8) was utilised to create a start list of descriptive pattern codes prior to data analysis. This was an unproductive way to work because similar pedagogical techniques were used to expose PSA children to oral English in various activities (whole class, small group, or individual). Moreover, the data revealed activities and incidents, containing oral English, but which did not appear in the Observation Schedule (the prayers, the greetings, questions about health);
- 5) A multi-pronged approach was thus used. I followed Jorgensen's (1989) suggestion of consulting prior studies on similar topics: although few studies were found on preschools, some were found on primary schools and these were used as indicators. I also used a more inductive approach, allowing empirically driven pattern codes to emerge from the data. Analysis began with the first piece of transcribed data and continued in a recursive and iterative manner throughout the transcribed data (Patton, 1990). Re-reading of the transcriptions led to a more selective coding of the data

(Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Codes were assigned and they were modified as the analysis of the transcription proceeded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, described in Hatch, 2002) helped in separating the data into distinct categories. Table 12 summarises the pattern codes and meta-codes emerging from the observations.

Table 12: Strategies used by teachers to expose learners to English: codes for data analysis

Broad Categories	Pattern Codes	Pattern Meta-Codes
Linguistic routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Code 1: Rituals: Prayer time ➤ Code 2: Routines 	
Strategies used to teach oral English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Code 1: Code-alteration ➤ Code 2: Questioning ➤ Code 3: Interpretation ➤ Code 4: Use of non-verbal strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Code 1.1: Equivalence ✓ Code 1.2: Eliciting metalinguistic awareness ✓ Code 1.3: Code-mixing: technical/key vocabulary ✓ Code 1.4: Code-switching: teacher-student exchanges ✓ Code 4.1: Visual aids ✓ Code 4.2: TPR

6) While analysing the data, two different but complementary approaches were taken. A **synchronic approach** was used to consider a whole sequence where children were exposed to oral English, from a language teaching methodology perspective. A **diachronic approach** was used to consider the educational value of these activities as they were organised over the year.

6.2.2 Document analysis: The yearly, weekly and daily plans

The yearly, weekly and daily plans were collected in PSA as another data type, to triangulate with the classroom observations. They were analysed following procedures described in Ch4.3. The main documents analysed are briefly described below.

The yearly plan (Appendix M.1), written on Bristol paper and stuck on the classroom wall, comes from PSA teachers' teacher training days. It contains the essence of the 2003PPG and articulates the broad aims of preschool education, without being specific about the place of oral English in it. T2 says that this yearly plan is used in many preschools. This is confirmed from my own observations in the preschools visited during the pilot study.

The weekly plan (Appendix M.2) follows a format provided by the PSTF and is divided into broad sections, including (1) a general section on language, and (2) a general section on Maths, without any precision made about the language of teaching. PSA teachers collectively and collaboratively write the weekly plan at the beginning or end of the week.

The daily plan, which is written daily by individual teachers, is prepared in relation to the weekly plan. In principle, the daily plan is used to guide the daily, enacted curriculum.

6.2.3 Teacher interviews

Post-observation structured interviews with the teachers (to triangulate with classroom observations and work plans) included questions about:

- PSA teachers' appreciation of the children's language background;
- PSA teachers' aims and objectives in including English in their daily and weekly work plans;
- PSA teachers' beliefs about the introduction and place of English at preschool level.

(Refer to **Appendix N.2, N.3 and N.6** for data)

6.2.4 Teacher assessment

An oral English proficiency test was used to assess the individual proficiency of the three preschool teachers (refer to Ch4.4.5). The oral proficiency test, which was a past oral Cambridge School Certificate exam paper required the teachers to (1) read a passage in English, (2) describe a picture, and (3) engage in a conversation with the researcher. The assessment was carried out at the end of the school year and was tape-recorded. An experienced oral SC oral English exam assessor was asked to assess the teachers' level of proficiency. The assessor's report shows that the teachers have limited English proficiency: they can read simple English texts and can use very basic English, with little fluency (refer to **Appendix K.2** for the assessor's report).

6.3 Presenting and analysing the findings

In an attempt to address **SRQ(ii)**, Ch6.3 will be divided into two main sub-sections, which will:

- briefly consider the place of English within more extended French discourse (Ch6.3.1);
- focus on the techniques PSA teachers use to expose children to oral English (Ch6.3.2-6.3.4).

6.3.1 Preferred language of communication

The classroom observations in PSA indicate that English usually occurs within the more extended French discourse of teachers.⁵⁰ This marked preference for French as main language of communication seems paradoxical in a situation where PSA teachers claim that the children usually use Kreol (their L1/home language) to speak to teachers and other children.⁵¹ Kreol is thus the common language and "preferred language" (Alfonzetti, 1992, in Ramat, 1995: 52) of the children (and the teachers too, who use

⁵⁰ This preference for Kreol and French, as the languages which teachers claim to prefer to use and do use with the school children, was also noted in the quantitative data from the questionnaire during the pilot study. Of the 15 preschool teachers, 9 teachers claimed to use French and Kreol, one teacher claimed to use French only, and 5 teachers claimed to use English and French. It thus seems that teachers tend to use French liberally, while they seem to use English and Kreol more sparingly.

⁵¹ This predominance of Kreol as home language was also noted in the quantitative data from the pilot study. Out of 15 teachers, 8 teachers claimed that the children used French and Kreol, while 7 said that the children used only Kreol at school amongst themselves and to address the teacher.

Kreol exclusively amongst themselves). This preference for French is also paradoxical in the context where the 2003PPG explicitly recommends that the children's home language and language of the environment should be the language of communication.

Such a language choice renders problematical Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993, 1998), which suggests that, "the engine driving linguistic choices is rationality, a mechanism universally available to humans" (Myers-Scotton, 1998, cited in Deumart 2005: 119; Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai, 2001: 5). Judging from PSA teachers' language choice, I would argue that "rationality" is not a fixed notion but a state that is determined by the sociolinguistic background, which is itself a dynamic context formed by the dominant ideological forces. On being asked to comment on their language choice (French rather than Kreol), PSA teachers say that the children can already speak Kreol, that their parents prefer teachers to use French, and that Kreol and French are mutually intelligible. Hence, the teachers' language preference and language choice suggest that they believe that the children have a set of rights (the right to be spoken to in French) and they, as teachers, have a set of obligations (speaking to the children in French) appropriate for that setting (the preschool classroom), even if this implies that they are using a language that they know less well (Scotton, 1983, 1988, in Wei & Milroy, 1995: 296) and that the children know less well too. Teachers also believe that French has higher status than Kreol: in fact, PSA teachers⁵² said that they were reluctant to use Kreol in school as a means of instruction or a medium for communication (**Appendix N.2**). In a context where English and French (respectively) have prominent places in the education system, they choose to give priority to French probably because they are conscious (and exploit the fact) that the use of French will not act as a barrier to children's comprehension.

I now consider the strategies used by teachers to introduce children to oral English.

⁵² This was the same for the teachers from whom data were collected during the pilot study. Moreover, T1 said that, "The Cambridge exams are in English. If we start education in Kreol, why stop at CPE level? We should then carry on in Kreol. Then there will be a problem for the child at university level. If English is learnt only in English classes, knowledge of English will not be enough for that transition to English as medium whenever it takes place."

6.3.2 Linguistic routines

The observed linguistic routines that PSA teachers engage in do not appear in the daily, weekly, or yearly plan, suggesting that the teachers do not have precise oral English teaching objectives when they go through these daily routines. However, these routines remain moments when the children are exposed to oral English in their day at the preschool.

6.3.2.1 Code 1: Rituals: Prayer time

Prayer time was carried out as a whole class activity, partly in English, every morning throughout 2005. The longitudinal aspect of the study has demonstrated that such regular repetition by the children resulted in the children having completely memorised the prayer (although the extent to which they understood the prayer was not formally verified). On 30 June 2005 (field notes), two of the pre-school teachers were talking to each other, and T3 started saying the first sentence of the prayer and then got distracted by the conversation between T1 and T2. At that moment, I noted that the children themselves started chanting the prayer, and completed the prayer without making any 'mistake'. This goes to show the enormous retentive capacity of the young learners.

As well as being carried out on a regular basis, it was observed that prayer time followed a set pattern. Having acknowledged that the sequential environment is crucial to one's understanding of the meaning and impact of code-alternation, I have delimited the unit of conversation containing the prayer as consisting of three main events:

- The teacher requests (in French) children to take the posture required for saying prayers;
- The daily morning prayer is systematically recited in English: the teacher recites the prayer line by line and the children repeat after her;
- The children sing a French song (about what children usually do in the morning before coming to school).

Excerpt 1

3 March 2005

Circle-time, all teachers and children gathered in a circle at the beginning of the school day.

T1:	Allez, joignez les mains...(pause) fermez les yeux, baissez la tête...(pause).	Come on, put your hands together ... (pause) close your eyes, bow your head... (pause).
T2:	Viens on va faire la prière.	Come, we'll say the prayers.
T1:	O God (Ss) purify my heart (Ss) and help me (Ss) to fill it (Ss) with divine love (Ss) O god (Ss) purify my hands (Ss) and let them work (Ss) for humanity (Ss).	O God (Ss) purify my heart (Ss) and help me (Ss) to fill it (Ss) with divine love (Ss) O god (Ss) purify my hands (Ss) and let them work (Ss) for humanity (Ss).
T1:	Il faut pas crier...qui crie?...il faut respecter la prière.	You must not shout...who is shouting? ... You have to respect the prayer.
Ss: sing and mime	Ma prière est faite, aussitôt levé. Je fais ma toilette et je bois mon lait. Je pars pour l'école comme un bon enfant. Disant la parole: au revoir, maman; au revoir, papa.	My prayers are said, as soon as I am up. I wash up, and I drink my milk. I go to school like a good child, saying: good-bye, mother; good-bye, father.

Excerpt 1, as well as the yearlong observation at PSA, indicates that English prayer reciting is part of a ritual (within a conversation), characterised by a moment of code-switching to English. Given the children's limited proficiency in English at the beginning of the year (Ch9.4.2, Table 25), it is doubtful whether the children actually understand what they are saying. Bunyi (2005: 134) notes a similar type of English praying activity in Kenya, arguing that it "does not represent meaningful knowledge about how to pray in English," while Prinsloo & Stein (2004) describe South African preschool teachers drilling a formidable, varied and often linguistically complex body of prayers into children, so that by simply nominating these prayers, teachers can expect children to collectively take up the cue.

In the context where the children have limited comprehension of English, PSA teachers have been observed to make use of extra-linguistic cues to make the children aware of the religious nature of the activity. They ask the children to keep quiet, they themselves stand straight, bow their heads, fold their hands and close their eyes, before they actually start the prayer session. They also systematically and unfailingly use the same English

prayer throughout 2005. This can be explained by the fact that English is the only neutral language that can be used for morning prayers if prayers are to be perceived as universal, and as including all the children, irrespective of religious and ethnic group. French prayers would have been associated with Catholicism (French is the language of the Catholic Church); prayers in any of the OL (for instance, Urdu/Arabic and Hindi) would have been associated with the other religious groups (Muslims and Hindus, respectively); Kreol would be a difficult choice in a context where it is considered to have low status. Although Mauritians use Kreol to talk about religious matters in churches, mosques and temples, the prayers themselves are actually said in French, Arabic and Sanskrit; Kreol is never used to say prayers. (Atchia-Emmerich, 2005; Rajah-Carrim, 2004).

It seems that this English prayer saying ritual has acquired some kind of institutional status in Mauritius. I observed that the same English prayer was used in the primary section of PSA, as well as PSB (pre-primary and primary sections) and all the other pre-schools I had visited in 2004 as part of my pilot study. It would appear that in the 1980's, the practice in primary schools was to have silent prayers so as to allow all students from the different religious groups to participate in the morning assembly. In the 1990's, some head teachers started using the English prayer, but there are some schools, which still have silent prayers (Ballgobin, p.c.). The Head Teacher of PSB (p.c.) explained that the Ministry of Education had sent a copy of the prayer, after consciousness had been raised about Human Values, and he said that most schools utilise this prayer for the daily assembly.

Excerpt 1 also suggests that stereotypes about the one-to-one relationship between language and religion (which reproduce political discourse) are constructed early in the child's life. While PSA teachers use English for the formal prayer session, they code-switch to Urdu and Hindi to refer to Muslim and Hindu religious places and practices in the conversations with the children:⁵³ words like "madrassah, namaaz, namashiva, poojah" have been heard (Refer to **Appendix O: O.1**). In line with Gafaranga's (2005)

⁵³ The religious factor has an effect on the teachers' activities: all lunches I attended during the year included two dishes: a vegetarian dish for vegetarian Hindus and a *Halal* chicken dish for non-vegetarian Hindus, Muslims and the others.

claim that language forms part of the social structure, code-alternation can be argued to be an important means of conveying linguistic, social (Gal, 1979, in Grosjean 1982), political (Ramat, 1995: 60) and, I would add, religious information. I, however, concede that the social and religious meanings associated with the various languages can be read as problematical in an island involved in nation building. Nevertheless, through this code-switching, PSA teachers (by extension, the institution) contribute to the creation of a double identity for the children within the locally bound constraints of the interaction (Deumart, 2005: 120) and situation: a secular religious identity mediated through the use of English, and a personal religious identity mediated through the use of the OL. These observed practices, which have implicit meanings, become a concerted collective practice in primary school OL classes, which start with prayers in the respective OL. I noticed, as I walked through the primary school in the mornings to go to the preschool section (PSA), that the oriental language classes start the class with what appears to be prayers in the OL. I thus investigated from the OL teachers whether prayers were actually being said in the OL. They confirmed that it is generally the case that OL classes start with prayers. This seems to be the practice in many primary and secondary schools in Mauritius. In any case, I must admit that the children themselves are very much aware of their religious identity when they come to the preschool. For instance, it was observed that during prayer time, some children fold their hands like their teachers, while others open their hands:⁵⁴ this reflects on the home environment in which children are religiously educated and socialised.

I would thus argue that through the choice of language at prayer time, the institution is implicitly reinforcing the child's dual identity, as a secular and religious being, from the beginning of schooling.

⁵⁴ Those who open their hands are Muslims: I can recognize them by their names. It would seem that the home environment influences this: some of the children attend *madrassas*, church services, *baitkas*, which make them aware of their religious particularity.

6.3.2.2 Code 2: Routines

Greetings, health-questions and questions about the day, carried out in English, typically occur at the beginning of circle time, where the teachers gather all the children of PSA in a circle in the middle of the classroom for the morning class assembly.

Excerpt 2

18 May 2005

Circle time, all children at the centre of the classroom (same pattern observed on 31 May, 14 June, 26 August, 2 September 2005).

T2:	Bonjour, les enfants.	Good morning, children
Ss:	Bonjour, Miss.	Good morning, Miss
T2:	Good morning, children.	Good morning, children.
Ss:	Good morning, Miss.	Good morning, Miss.
T2:	How are you children?	How are you children?
Ss:	I am very well thank you, Miss.	I am very well thank you, Miss.
T2:	Les enfants, on est bien. Tout le monde est bien?	Children, we are well? Everyone is well?
Ss:	Oui	Yes
T2:	Qui est malade? Qui est malade? Personne?	Who is ill? Who is ill? Nobody?
S:	Moi.	Me
T2:	Tu es malade. Qu'est ce que tu as?	You are ill? What do you have?
S:	Silence	Silence
T2:	Qu'est ce que tu as? (x2) Tu as la fièvre? Tu as la fièvre?	What do you have? (x2) You have fever? You have fever?]
S:	Oui	Yes
T2:	Tu es malade. Quand on est malade, qu'est ce qu'il faut faire? Il faut apporter tricot!	You are ill. When you are ill, what must you do? You must bring your cardigan!
T2 talks to T1.		

Excerpt 3

26 August 2005

Circle-time, conversation about the cold temperature.

T1:	Oui, c'est l'hiver. C'est pourquoi il fait froid. Tout le monde a mis tricot la?	Yes, it is winter. That's why it is cold. Everyone is wearing a cardigan?
Ss:	Oui	Yes
T1:	Très bien. Allez. Good morning, children.	Very good. Come on. Good morning, children
Ss:	Good morning, Miss.	Good morning, Miss.
T1:	Bonjour, les enfants.	Good morning, children.
Ss:	Bonjour, Miss.	Good morning, Miss.

The greeting sessions described in **Excerpts 2** and **3** are representative of the yearlong observations in PSA. These sessions indicate that greetings are systematically and simultaneously performed in English and French using the concurrent translation technique. Although this technique might clarify the meaning of ‘good morning’ at the beginning of the year, it underplays the communicative value of the greeting when utilised throughout the year in this ritualistic type of exchange. The English greeting session becomes like a scene to be acted: note from **Excerpt 3** that the preliminary “Allez” [*Come on*] prepares the children for starting the English act. The same “staging” practice is noted in upper primary Botswana classrooms (Arthur, 1996: 26) and in mid-primary Botswana and Brunei schools (Arthur & Martin, 2006: 194), with reference to English lessons.

To these English greetings, the children reply in a mechanical manner, reciting the expected ready-made answer. Different from prefabricated patterns (which are comprehensible and may lead to development of language learning), these prefabricated routines (memorised utterances/phrases) appear to be immune to rules at first (Krashen, 1988b: 83). They are evidence of automatic habit formation where learners pick up chunks of language through habitual use while not necessarily understanding the meaning of individual words (Hamayan & Damico, 1991). The automatic replies save effort in processing, and achieve interactional functions (act of communicating) (Wray, 2000: 465).

Moreover, in their replies to the ritual greetings, the children are not necessarily giving a truthful answer.⁵⁵ In **Excerpt 2**, the same question is asked again in French, but this time for more genuine communicative purposes as the children are given the opportunity to reply truthfully. While such exchanges provide PSA teachers and children with the chance to display their English language skills (also noticed in Kenya, Bunyi, 2005: 134),

⁵⁵ This ritual is not particular to the preschool observed. It is also present in the other pre-primary schools observed in the pilot phase of data collection in 2004, and in the primary school to which the observed preschool was attached. It was noted that in the morning general assemblies, the headmaster of the primary school asks the same question to the older children, with the same ready-made reply. The older children often also add, as do some of the children in the other pre-schools visited during the pilot study, “and how are you Miss?” to which the teacher also gives the same ready-made answer. All this is recited in a very rhythmic sing-song manner.

and they give teachers, students and parents the impression that English is provided, taught and learnt, they carry little communicative value. Chick (1996, 2001) uses the term “safe talk” to describe such activities.

Although Krashen (1988b: 99) distinguishes routines from creative language, he concedes that they may be useful for establishing social relations and encouraging intake.

6.3.3 Oral English teaching strategies

Contrasted with Ch6.3.2, where the communicative value of the exchanges containing English is not apparent, Ch6.3.3 concentrates on the strategies PSA teachers use to teach oral English to preschoolers.

6.3.3.1 Code 1: Code-alternation

As detailed in Table 12, within the larger code: **code-alternation**, four meta-codes emerged from the data. They are discussed separately below.

Code 1.1: Translation: Equivalence

Excerpt 4 7 June 2005 Small group Maths activity		
T1:	Dans notre main, nous avons cinq doigts. We have five fingers.	In our hand, we have five fingers. We have five fingers.
T1:	Rouge: Red, Red.	Red: Red, Red.

(Refer to **Appendix P: P.1** for more examples)

Excerpt 4 is an example of the use of direct translation (the use of words, phrases, and/or sentences from two languages one after the other) as a language teaching strategy, reported to being used in other S/FL contexts like Tanzania and South Africa (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004: 78). It can be noted that the direction of code-alternation tends to be from French to English, indicating that PSA children are almost always in a situation of learning oral English, that PSA teachers assume that the children know no

English, and that PSA teachers believe that children need to be introduced to and taught English.

Code 1.2: Metalinguistic awareness

PSA teachers have been observed to use the **direct technique** of explicitly asking the equivalent term in English for a provided French term. For instance, PSA teachers will use: “comment on dit en anglais?” [*how do you say in English?*], “Maintenant, en anglais!” [*now, in English*], “en anglais, on appelle ça...” [*in English, we call this...*], “en anglais, on dit...” [*in English, we say...*], “d’abord en français, et puis en anglais...” [*first in French, and then in English...*]. PSA teachers also use the **indirect technique** of implicitly asking the equivalent term in English for a provided French term. PSA teachers have been observed to say: “on dit...” [*we say...*], “comment on dit?” [*how do we say?*], “qu’est-ce que ça veut dire?” [*what does it mean?*], “qu’est ce qu’on a dit là?” [*what did we just say there?*], “c’est quoi?” [*what is?*]. Here, PSA students are trained to give the English equivalent as soon as teachers provide them with the verbal cue (refer to **Appendix P.2**).

These techniques, consistently used, make students aware that there are different languages in their environment, that these languages have names that distinguish them from each other, and that they are in a formal language teaching and language learning environment.

Code 1.3: Code-mixing: technical/key vocabulary

Despite the fact that the weekly plans (**Appendix M.2**), which are written in English, do not explicitly reveal that PSA teachers aim to teach the mathematical concepts in English, and despite the fact that most of the mathematical terms have their equivalent forms in Kreol/French, the data show that the observed teachers most frequently switch from French/Kreol to English for the technical mathematical vocabulary. This technical mathematical vocabulary is fairly limited at preschool level and consists of: (1) numbers: *one to ten*, (2) shapes: *rectangle, square, circle, triangle, cube*, (3) primary colours: *red*,

blue, yellow, green, (4) size: big, small, (5) specialised mathematical-technical vocabulary: number, set(s), matching, and (6) prepositions: in, out, under.

Excerpt 5

3 May 2005

Small group Maths activity

T2:	Allez on va faire number one...number one , c'est combien? Comment on écrit number one maintenant?	So, we will write number one...number one , how many is that? How do we write number one now?
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An analysis of the PSA teachers' weekly plans reveals that they teach **numbers** in the most regular manner over the year, with a particular effort on the teachers' part to do numbers 1 to 10: when teaching numbers, there is always the tendency to start counting from one. This is evidence that PSA teachers make use of scaffolding when teaching numbers. However, PSA teachers teach **colours** and **shapes** with less regularity, and **size** and **prepositions** even far less often.

The data also reveal that the English words for body parts were regularly taught over the year in PSA. For example,

Excerpt 6

12 July 2005

Circle time: Whole class

T2:	Bon, on va faire un petit peu parts of the body .	So, we will do a bit parts of the body .
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(Refer to **Appendix P.3** for more examples).

However, the same insistence to teach other English lexical items was not noted during the year's observation. Since 'body parts' is the first activity found in the Std1 EVS book, this probably indicates that PSA teachers want to 'prepare' the children for Std 1.

The post-observation interviews (**Appendix N.3**), in fact, revealed that PSA teachers aim to prepare their students for Std1 because of they are worried about the use of English as the LoL and written MoI in Std1. The teachers have a set of objectives, which are to

teach similar topics, themes and vocabulary items that are in the Std1 book: for instance, body parts, some basic words, colours, shapes, numbers. The weekly and daily plans show PSA teachers' concern for teaching mathematical concepts repeatedly (**Appendix M.2**). PSA teachers said they felt they had to prepare the children for a less traumatic and difficult transition to Std1, where the entire Maths syllabus is in English. Indeed, the Std1 textbook (Ch2.4.5) indicates that the above named concepts are taught formally, in both the oral and written forms, during the first year of primary school.

The data show that PSA teachers also use English terms to refer to certain official festivities and functions: Parents' Day and Music Day. Because these are celebrated in all schools in Mauritius, the official language is usually used to describe them.

Code 1.4: Code switching in student-teacher exchanges

Although PSA teachers tend to ask questions in French/Kreol because the children are proficient enough in French/Kreol to understand, the data reveal that there are instances when the teachers and students do not use the same language in a question-answer session.

PSA teachers have been observed to attempt to ask a simple question in English, in which case the pupils sometimes fail to understand the question leading to a breakdown in the 'conversation' and the teachers have to resort to the French/Kreol question-equivalent, as illustrated in **Excerpt 7**.

Excerpt 7		
11 May 2005		
Small group Maths activity		
T2:	Where is the bottle?	Where is the bottle?
S:	De l'eau.	Water.
T2:	Where is the bottle? Où est la bouteille?	Where is the bottle? Where is the bottle?
S:	La tête.	The head.
T2:	Comment on va dire?	How will we say?
S:	Sur la tête.	On the head.

When asked a simple question in English, which they understand, PSA children tend to respond in French as shown in **Excerpt 8**. It is, however, interesting to note that while at the beginning of the year, the teachers would allow students to respond to the “what is the day?”- question in French, from the middle of the year, teachers corrected them, as illustrated below.

Excerpt 8 ⁵⁶ 14 June 2005 Whole class activity (Similar teacher's reaction on 12.7.05)		
T1:	What day is today?	What day is today?
S:	Mercredi	Wednesday
T2:	J'ai demandé en anglais. What day is today?	I asked in English. What day is today?
S:	Tuesday.	Tuesday.
T2:	Très bien. Today is Tuesday. Kus, quand je pose la question en anglais, tu réponds en anglais.	Very good. Today is Tuesday. Kus, when I ask the question in English, you answer in English.

(Refer to **Appendix P.4** for more examples)

Conversely, the data reveal that when teachers ask questions pertaining to mathematical concepts in French, students tend to instantly reply in English:

Excerpt 9 5 April 2005 Small group activity		
T:	Ca ki été ca? (Kreol)	What is this?
S:	Circle	Circle

This marked switch to the unfamiliar language, English, in the pupils' response is probably related to the fact that teachers repeatedly teach mathematical concepts in English, as illustrated in **Excerpts 4 and 5**. Such code-switching shows a degree of incoherence on PSA teachers' part. While they tell the children, with respect to the days, to reply to an English question in English, and to a French question in French, they accept

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that exactly the same dialogue is used in South African preschools too (Bloch, 2000a: 14).

the children's regular English replies on mathematical concepts to their own French questions. Moreover, they themselves constantly engage in code-alternation when they talk to the children, the most obvious example being that the children always speak to them in Kreol and they most often reply in French.

6.3.3.2 Code 2: Questioning as a teaching technique

The data revealed that questioning was extensively used as a technique to teach English vocabulary in PSA. The distinguishing feature of this strategy is that teachers used only closed questions. However, because of learners' limited proficiency in English, it would have been unrealistic for teachers to expect any kind of response to open questions. This technique, nevertheless, indicates that teachers generally dominate classroom talk in a teacher-fronted and teacher-centred environment. This has been noted in primary schools in Mauritius (Griffiths, 2000), as well as in primary and secondary schools in other African and Asian countries (Arthur, 1994; Bunyi, 1997; Chick, 1996; Fuller & Snyder, 1991; Martin, 2005; Rubagumya, 1994). The questioning strategy also demonstrates that teachers are using the strategy to explicitly teach semantic relationships. Lemke (1990, cited in Chick & McKay, 2001: 171) describes such questioning strategies as a "triadic dialogue" (where teachers ask questions, call on the learner to answer them and evaluate them), which arguably involves a transposition of (teacher) monologue into the appearance of true dialogue.

It seems that the use such questioning strategies are widespread in situations where understanding, rather than speaking, is the focus of the language programme (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 4). Such questioning strategies, which resemble the grammar-translation method of language teaching, also make fewer demands on the teachers who function largely within the behavioristic tradition of language teaching, where teachers provide the stimulus and get the desired response without being able to verify whether the response is the result of the children's understanding and remembering, or their reflex. Indeed, questions were asked to test whether learners memorised what was just taught. Through these echoic questions (Long and Sato, 1983, cited in Hendricks, 2003: 32), teachers require the repetition of an utterance as a confirmation that it has been properly

understood as in **Excerpt 10**. However, with this technique, (1) teachers are developing and testing learners' short-term memory, (2) learners are only expected to chorally repeat what they have just been told, in a pattern-and-drill type of exercise:

Excerpt 10 3 March 2005 Whole class activity		
T:	Le salon, on dit living room .	The living room, we say living room .
Ss:	Living room .	Living room .
T:	Comment on dit le salon?	How do we say living room?
Ss:	Living room .	Living room .

(Refer to **Appendix P.5** for more examples)

Questions were also asked for rhetorical purposes. Hendricks (2003: 32) talks about these "pseudo-questions" where teachers do not wait for the answer but answer their own questions immediately, as in **Excerpt 11**. Teachers seem to ask such questions with the aim to provide the answers themselves. In this type of activity, the act of questioning loses its communicative and inquisitive value as the nature of the activity undermines the communicative capability of the question posed:

Excerpt 11 24 February 2005 Whole class language activity		
T:	Comment on va dire notre maison? My house (Ss) Comment on va dire le mur? The wall (Ss)	How will we say our house? My house (Ss) How will we say the wall? The wall (Ss).

Finally, teachers asked question to then provide part of the answer as a clue for the students. This strategy is an oral 'filling in the blank' exercise, where the class is required to complete teachers' sentences, as in **Excerpt 12**. This exercise gives the impression to the teachers and the learners that they know the English equivalent for French words, another example of "safe talk".

Excerpt 12

18 May 2005

Whole class language activity

T:	Comment on dit maman en anglais? Mo- ?	<i>How do we say mother in English? Mo-</i> ?
Ss:	- ther.	- ther.

Such practices are common in other parts of the world: for instance, in Botswana and Brunei (Arthur, n.d., in Hendricks, 2003: 34; Arthur & Martin, 2006: 189). However, it is not clear whether these include mainly countries with an oral language background.

In sum, Mercer (1995) says that such questioning strategies give strong clues to the right answer and are examples of how easy it is to slide from scaffolding as a learning support mechanism to scaffolding as a device to enable students to complete tasks successfully.

6.3.3.3 Code 3: Interpretation

It was observed that singing was a playful, widespread and regular activity used in PSA and teachers had a repertoire of thirteen English songs (**Appendix Q**). This is in line with the 2003PPG. The interpretation technique, where PSA teachers did not teach the meaning of individual words but gave the general interpretation of a sentence, was used only in relation to English songs. An example of interpretation was seen during the singing of *Ba! Ba! Black Sheep* which was always followed by the French version of the song: the latter version reflecting on and interpreting the meaning of the English song. In the case of the *BINGO* song, the teacher introduced the song with a summary of the contents of the song in French:

Excerpt 13

21 May 2005

Whole class singing activity

T:	Son grand père a un chien qui s'appelle BINGO. Alors on va dire, My grandfather , c'est grand père et BINGO, c'est son chien. Allez.	His grandfather has a dog, his name is BINGO. Come on, we will say, My grandfather , this is the grandfather and BINGO, is his dog. Come on.
(T sings the song, sentence by sentence with children repeating after each sentence)		

Even though interpretation was often used to give the children the gist of the meaning of songs, this technique was not systematically used for all English songs. In the case of the

National Anthem, no attempt was made to explain the song to the children (possibly because the concepts embodied in the National Anthem were perceived as being too complex for 4 - 5 year olds). This technique does not seem to have been used to teach oral English comprehension.

Mora (2000: 150-151) says that singing can be beneficial for language learners: its use encourages them to be quiet, it is an easy way of memorising (repetitive lyrics in songs have a positive effect on students' language acquisition and language learning), it is an effective way of providing students with lexical patterns that are stored and easily retrieved during oral interaction and it improves pronunciation skills. In PSA, singing does not appear to have been optimally used by the teachers as a language teaching strategy.

6.3.3.4 Code 4: The use of non-verbal strategies

Code 4.1: TPR

Despite TPR being described as the most appropriate language teaching method to use with children (Ch3.6.1), TPR was not much utilised as language teaching approach in PSA. Body parts, which were regularly taught to the children at circle time, were taught using TPR. The teacher touched the various parts of her body, and the children imitated her, while chorus repeating the words. Some of the songs related to the body and to actions were also accompanied by physical gestures, in a TPR fashion. For instance, PSA teachers used TPR with *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*; *Emily has a basket*; *See-Saw*, and *Ah Tishoo!*. However, the second and third songs were also explained using verbal strategies.

Code 4.2: Visual aids

Various types of visual aids were used over the year. Objects, such as an egg or a bottle, were brought to class and used. Hand made and commercial charts were decoratively displayed in the classroom and were used to teach concepts like colours. Drawings and paintings ('parts of a tree', fruits, vegetables) were painstakingly produced by teachers to teach the name of the objects. These were used, from time to time, to support the verbal

strategies regularly being employed to teach English words for objects and concepts. Picture books were used twice over the yearlong observation, and the question of the scarce use of print materials to demonstrate and teach words and concepts is addressed in detail in Ch7.

6.3.4 Extended excerpts

In order to extract and analyse particular instances of exposure to oral English in **one** preschool context, breaking the lessons into parts seemed to be the most appropriate approach. However, the limitation of this approach is that it sacrifices the wider picture of the lesson. I have thus included **two** longer excerpts, which capture the complexity of the situation in **Appendix O.2**. These extended excerpts reveal that PSA teachers use the various strategies mentioned above within the same language and mathematics lesson. Teachers also seem to favour the ‘pattern and drill’ approach, with students repeating words and very short phrases after the teachers (the extensive use of repetition has been noted in other ex-colonies, such as Malaysia - Martin, 2005: 84).

From the longer excerpts, it can be observed that PSA teachers sometimes face difficulties when trying to teach the same concept in three languages concurrently through constant translation. Within the same lesson, teachers have been observed to juggle with the three languages (Kreol, French and English): while a concept in French is taught in relation to and in translation from Kreol, the teaching of the English equivalent takes place within the same lesson and in relation to the French/Kreol equivalent. This gave teachers a sense of failure because at the end of the lesson transcribed in **Appendix O.2, Excerpt O3**, the English instructions still had to be translated into French/Kreol for the children to do the activity. Not only did the teachers feel the sense of failure, one teacher actually articulated a sense of loss. On 22 March 2005, T1 had been juggling among the three languages (English/French/Kreol) to teach the prepositions *on/under*. At the end of the activity, it appeared that the children had still not remembered the English words for the concept being taught. This is when T1 asked me whether I thought that teaching in three languages was too much for the children. Keeping my status as an unobtrusive observer, I refrained from giving my opinion, simply replying that she would

know better. She then told me that she thought that juggling with the three languages was very confusing for the children, and that she would concentrate on the French words for teaching the concepts on one day and then would do the English words for the same concepts the following day. The teacher's comment, which revealed her inner thoughts and feelings, shows the tension that teachers experience in a situation where they feel that they have to teach the same thing in at least two languages (French and English).

6.4 Discussion

What transpires from the above data is that PSA teachers use code-switching as the main teaching strategy, they use 'safe-talk' in the classroom, they do not seem to provide quality input in sufficient amount to PSA children, and they possibly unknowingly teach an implicit curriculum. These are discussed below.

6.4.1 Code-switching as a teaching strategy

As illustrated in Ch6.3, PSA teachers tend to use **verbal** strategies as a means to introduce preschoolers to new English words, concepts and phrases. Hence, children are introduced to English vocabulary primarily through their equivalent in another language, through code-switching. This technique, observed in PSA, has also been observed in primary and secondary schools in various parts of Africa and Asia (refer to Ferguson, 2003: 40 for a summary overview of classroom code-switching, see also Cleghorn & Rollnick, 2002; Martin, 2005; Ramanathan, 1999; Sridhar, 2002; Vavrus, 2002).

To date, the debate around the desirability of classroom code-switching has found proponents and opponents. Proponents like Adendorff (1992, 1993, 1996), Arthur (1996), Canagarajah (1995) and Ferguson (2003: 40) argue that code-switching is used as a communicative resource that enables teachers and learners to accomplish a considerable number and range of social functions (to establish close relationship, for classroom management) and academic functions (to explain S/FL lexis, to explain subject matter, to clarify lesson content.) Conversely, opponents see code-switching as a sign of linguistic deficiency (Lin, 1996); a technique that can create compound and not coordinate bilinguals; a technique that may affect learners' attitudes towards language(s) (Kunene,

1996). Cleghorn & Dube (1999: 249) summarise the different views about the desirability of classroom code-switching by saying that “code-switching may render schooling process more familiar and thus facilitate learning; however, code-switching reduces the amount of exposure to English thus impeding development of TL.” In the context of such a debate, Elridge (1996: 303, in Kamwangamalu; 2000: 60) convincingly argues that “it is vital that we understand precisely the causes, motivations, and effects of code-switching, and that until that point we avoid making rash, censorial judgements on its classroom manifestations.” On the other hand, Martin (2005: 90) says that we need to bear in mind that a corollary to code-switching is whether teacher training programmes in multilingual contexts take into account the realities and pragmatics of classroom language use in such contexts.

In the local preschool context, I would argue that the constant and repetitive use of code-switching might be a problematic language teaching strategy because code-switching is being used mainly as an oral English teaching strategy, and not for “academic functions” (Adendorff, 1993). The kind of English that PSA preschoolers are being exposed to is basic, beginners’ English, BICS (to use Cummins’ term), not the English used to accomplish complex cognitive operations (CALP) in later stages of education. With the oral English teaching strategy favoured by PSA teachers, the teachers give the learners the option of stemming out the non-dominant language (English). Since the translation into the student’s primary language (Kreol) or second language (French) comes soon before or after, learners can understand what is taking place in the class without understanding the English words and phrases. Cleghorn & Dube (1999: 249) argue that this pattern of slotting the L1 in direct translation and repetition indicates teachers’ beliefs that learners need to hear the content in their own language to ensure comprehension but without awareness that the learners may simply tune out the English, knowing that the content will come in the L1. Teachers thus reduce the opportunity for the learners to pay attention to the input, and restrict opportunities for language learning.

6.4.2 The practice of 'safe-talk'

Related to the observed code-switching practices is the extensive use of safe-talk initiated by PSA teachers. In the context of the PSA classroom, safe-talk refers to teacher-learner chorusing, linguistic routines, closed-ended questions, and pseudo-questions. Various explanations are provided in the literature for safe-talk strategies. I argue that teachers use safe talk to help learners learn technical vocabulary in a language that learners and teachers lack familiarity with and lack fluency in.

According to Chick (1996: 28), "safe talk" serves the academic function of reinforcing certain key information items and perhaps helping students become more familiar with technical terms. Describing the South African context, Chick sees safe talk as a style participants developed as a means of coping with overwhelming odds they faced in segregated schools under apartheid South Africa. However, he sees it as a barrier to both learning and educational innovation in South Africa. It seems to me that PSA teacher might be also using safe talk in order to reinforce the vocabulary that they consider to be essential for learners to know before they move to Std 1, that is, the Maths and EVS vocabulary that preschoolers will come across at the beginning of Std1. This practice is reinforced by teachers' belief in the importance of mimicry and memorisation in learning. Since PSA teachers went to school in the days of behaviorism, it is likely that they believe in the importance of memorisation and repetition (Arthur n.d., cited in Hendricks, 2003: 34). Hence, they use memorisation and repetition, which are safe talk strategies in the sense that they require little cognitive effort on the part of teachers and learners. This practice might be further exacerbated by the fact that repetition is part of the local oral culture. Alexander (2000) and Clarke (2001, cited in Pontefract & Hardman, 2005: 102) argue that safe talk comes from the oral African tradition where repetition and chorusing are distinguishing features. In Mauritius, repetition and chorusing are characteristic of religious practices and ceremonies (Ch8.4.2), and this is transferred to the classroom as seen in the chorus repetition of the English prayers at circle time in PSA.

Talking from a similar context of language learning and teaching as Chick, Arthur (1996) and Arthur & Martin (2006: 192) say that ritualised practices typical of safe talk are the

result of the constraints imposed by the requirement for use of an FL as MoI, rather than as a traditional pattern of interaction (oral). Arthur & Martin (2006: 192) also mention the washback effect of external testing as another possible cause of teachers' use of safe talk. For instance, the end of primary exams in Kenya (Cleghorne *et al.*, 1989) makes use of multiple choice format questions requiring selection of answers. This has an impact on teachers' pedagogical practices in the class, where they practise question-answer interactions that are not conducive to the general understanding of general basic principles. Although there is no entry exam for Std1 in Mauritius, exams are part of the local culture and they have a washback effect down to the preschool level. According to a primary school inspector, "the backwash effect of the national examinations at the primary level is affecting the pre-primary curriculum in many schools" (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 68) (refer to Ch2.4.3). Moreover, it is a fact that a FL is the MoI as from Std1. In this complex linguistic and educational context, PSA teachers might feel compelled to introduce English, the language of primary education at preschool level, even though they lack the proficiency, training and means to do so in a meaningful and communicative manner. Such safe strategies as chorusing, linguistic routines, closed-ended questions, and pseudo-questions, used at primary school level (Griffiths, 2000), have a trickle down effect to preschool teacher practices.

Finally, Lin (1996) and Young *et al.* (1995) have argued that the teachers' own "linguistic deficiency" can explain why teachers adopt certain language teaching strategies. As shown in the assessor's report (**Appendix K.2**), PSA teachers have limited proficiency and fluency in English: they can read a text in English with some ease and fluency (Mean: 3.7 over 8 for the 'Reading' part of the test). However, when it comes to picture description and discussion, they seem to lack the vocabulary and the practice of speaking English (Mean: 6.7 over 16 for 'Picture Discussion'; Mean: 6.3 over 16 for 'Conversation'). Such a feeling of discomfort with using English as an oral means of communication might explain why teachers avoid using English communicatively, but rather use a safer mode of interaction in English, safe-talk.

6.4.3 The quality and quantity of input provided to learners

The use of code-switching and safe-talk as English language teaching strategies raises questions as to the quality and the quantity of the English input made available to PSA children. Referring to Cummins' (2005b) *Model of Academic Language* (Ch3.5.3), I would say that the quality of input that the children are exposed to is in the A quadrant (context-embedded, cognitively undemanding). The quality of the input is further impoverished by the fact that PSA teachers use strategies that provide opportunities to learners to stem out of English since French/Kreol equivalent terms often follow the English words.

In terms of the quantity of the input, there is a disparity between PSA learners' exposure to general English words and their exposure to technical (Maths and EVS) English words (refer to **Appendix R**, which shows regular planning in the teaching of mathematical concepts). While they hear general English words relevant to the daily topic (never to come back to the words again), they hear the Maths and EVS words regularly. Hence, scaffolding⁵⁷ is used with the Maths and EVS words, but it is not used with the general English words. Garcia & Beltran (2003: 213) argue that repetition and redundancy must be built into the English language development lesson plans since English language learners need repetition (beyond what struggling readers and native speakers need) to be able to learn the target language. Garcia & Beltran also state that each day's lesson must scaffold the next day's lesson in advance of the pacing of the regular curriculum. When considering the words PSA children are exposed to, there is a striking difference in the quantity of input provided depending on the subject matter taught.

It seems that PSA teachers should be encouraged to find ways of providing quality and quantity input. This can possibly be achieved by integrating meaningful and contextually relevant vocabulary in an English language programme that includes exposure to Maths, EVS, as well as more general English lexicon. Furthermore, meaningful repetition of

⁵⁷ Myhill & Warren (2005: 57) describe scaffolding as a mechanism by which teachers move the learners from current achievement to new achievement within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The aim of the scaffold is to support learners while they acquire necessary skills and understanding to operate independently.

vocabulary using the principle of scaffolding might also contribute to improving the quality and quantity of English input in this acquisition poor environment.

6.4.4 A parallel implicit curriculum

The strategies used to expose PSA children to English can be interpreted as including a parallel implicit curriculum (Ch3.6.4). Although there are pragmatic reasons that explain why teachers regularly explain English words through the French equivalent, such practices give implicit status to English as the less important language. This, in itself, is in opposition to the official LiEP, which demarcates English as the dominant language and French as the non-dominant language. Such a strategy also downplays the capacity of English to carry meaning on its own, independent of other languages. English is taught, since the very beginning of the education system, in explicit relation to and dependence on other languages. Moreover, the communicative ability of English is almost totally ignored. For instance, the ritualised morning greetings and the questions about health implicitly put across to the students a very limited function of English in the school context. Finally, this constant translation encourages the interference of French/Kreol in English. It is significant to note that the CPE reports (for instance, 2003: 7) point out that French/Kreol interference is a major weakness in the short continuous texts written by Mauritian Std6 pupils.

My analysis thus tends to agree with Nikula (2005: 40), who argues that students are socialised in qualitatively different discourses and that the ways in which teachers and students alternate between languages help “discoursally reinforce and construct the role of English as the object of study rather than as a means of communication.”

6.4.5 PSA teachers’ beliefs, training and language proficiency

The above discussion helps me address **SRQ(ii)**. In terms of preschool **teachers’ beliefs**, it is striking to note that absolutely all teachers from whom data were collected for this research (pilot study and main study) feel strongly about the need to introduce children to oral English at preschool level, with 80% teachers thinking that pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from pre-primary school (**Appendix N.6, Table**

(26)). It is, however, interesting to note that those teachers who thought that children from English medium schools were not at an advantage compared to children going to government schools, said that they thought both English and French were important in Mauritius. Hence, for those teachers, education is not complete in the local context without having developed proficiency in the two European languages. This indicates the potency of French as a prestigious social language in Mauritius. Such teachers' beliefs might explain their inclusion of both English and French in the preschool classroom.

It also seems to me PSA teachers' **teacher training** might account for their observed teaching strategies. Ch5.3.3 clearly illustrates that preschool teachers are not provided with the pedagogical tools to teach foreign languages to preschool children. In fact, PSA teachers are aware of this and they did complain about the theoretical nature of the teacher-training course, saying that it lacked the practical component they thought might have been beneficial to their own pedagogical practices (Ch5.5). In the absence of the support from teacher training, PSA teachers might be using other resources to inform their teaching practices, as for instance, their own past experience as primary school language learners.

As far as PSA teachers' **English language proficiency** goes, the language competencies of PSA teachers might act as a barrier to them teaching English and making use of English in class. The assessor's report indicates that while PSA teachers can read moderately well, they seem to have a lack of fluency, a poor vocabulary and basic sentence structures. In brief, this report indicates that PSA teachers themselves are neither articulate nor comfortable with oral English. The problem of teachers' insufficient language proficiency in the target language has been observed in other EFL contexts (Berry, 1990; Guntermann, 1992; Murdoch, 1994; Sadtono, 1995; Young *et al.*, 2005). Sešek (in press) argues that the particularity of FL teaching is that the target language is not only the subject but also the tool of the instruction process, suggesting that there is often not enough emphasis on teachers' knowledge of the target language in teacher training. This is apparently the case of PSA teachers.

6.5 Summary of Chapter 6

Using data collected through classroom observations, document analysis and teacher interviews, as well as considering teachers' proficiency in English, this chapter has attempted to describe PSA teachers' pedagogical practices when introducing children to oral English. The main finding of this chapter is that PSA teachers regularly teach English to the children because it is their way of preparing the children for Std1, but the quality and quantity of their input can be characterized in terms of:

- English being always part of extended French discourse;
- English being regularly used for routines, which have low communicative value;
- Code-switching from French to English being the main strategy used to introduce the children to English;
- There being a significant disparity between the general English vocabulary PSA children are exposed to on an *ad hoc* basis, and the regularity with which they are exposed to Maths and EVS vocabulary;
- There being an implicit curriculum, which presents English as lacking the capacity to be a communicative language.

The analysis indicates that although PSA teachers believe in the benefits of teaching oral English at preschool level, they lack the oral English language skills and the professional training that would empower them to teach oral English effectively. This has implications for the quality and quantity of input that they provide their students, as well as the implicit messages that they inadvertently send to their students.

CHAPTER 7

Literacy practices in Preschool A

Classroom observations, document analysis and teacher interviews

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to focus on PSA teachers' literacy practices in the classroom. As described in Ch3.8.1 & 4.4.6, the term 'literacy practices' will be used to refer to classroom events, which include any contact with print, while bearing in mind the cultural ways of utilising these events in particular situations. The sub-research questions, which will be addressed in this chapter, are:

With respect to teachers exposing preschoolers to pre-reading/writing,

SRQ(iv): What are teachers' pedagogical practices?

SRQ(v): How are these pedagogical practices possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training, access to materials and their own literacy practices?

In this chapter, I will also devote a section to storybook reading (Ch7.3.4), an activity containing both an oral and a print aspect.

7.2 Collecting and going through the data

7.2.1 Data collection methods

The main methods of data collection for this chapter are document analysis, video recording, field notes and teacher interviews.

Document analysis consisted of analysing the weekly plan, written by PSA teachers collectively and containing a 'Reading/Writing' section. I also analysed the daily plan, written by individual teachers and containing a 'Reading' section and a 'Writing' section. These sections detail the activities to be carried out, the objectives, the procedures and the mode of evaluation.

As far as video-recordings and field notes are concerned, I used the observation schedule, detailed in Ch4.4.5, Table 9 and my understanding of 'literacy practices' to decide what to video record. I recorded and kept note of all activities containing the use of print: reading, writing, looking at print, and talking about print. Samples of writing, drawing, or scribbling were also video-recorded and filed as artefacts. Although I remained sensitive to the observation schedules mentioned in the literature, I refrained from using them for reasons mentioned in Ch4.4.5.

Finally, yearlong unstructured interviews were carried out with PSA teachers, using the 'stimulated recall' technique. The data obtained from these interviews were kept as field notes. Post-observation interviews (**Appendix I**) were also carried out, and they included questions about teachers' personal literacy practices, teachers' engagement in direct and indirect literacy instruction, the school literacy environment, and book reading at school.

7.2.2 Data analysis procedures

Data were coded near the end of the data-collection period (September 2005), to allow time for the post-observation teacher interviews. The procedures for data analysis were carried out in the following phases:

- 1) Video recordings and field notes were consulted to identify the features of the observed literacy practices;
- 2) Following Miles and Huberman's (1994: 8), and Hatch's (2002: 52) description of typological analysis, similar literacy practices were grouped together under codes;
- 3) I used the literature review (Ch3.7.2) on the influence of the preschool on EL experiences to drive my data analysis. For a finer analysis, meta-codes were then

partly derived from the data falling into the two afore-mentioned broad categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), as described in Table 13.

Table 13: Strategies used by teachers to expose learners to literacy: codes for data analysis

Broad Categories	Pattern Codes
Teachers' literacy habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preschool Classroom Literacy Environment ➤ Modelling reading and writing
Teachers' literacy practices: Direct instruction Indirect instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Letters ➤ Words ➤ 'Functional literacy' activities ➤ Name writing
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The use of books ➤ The 'library corner' activity ➤ The storybook reading activity

- 4) A colleague looked at a sample of the video-recordings to ensure reliability in the coding;
- 5) For the purposes of triangulation, I referred to the data generated from the interviews, and the weekly and daily plans. These daily plans and weekly plans were consulted to consider the relationship between the intended and the taught curriculum, and to find explanations for teachers' literacy practices.

7.3 Data presentation and analysis

The aim of this section is to address **SRQ(iv)**. In this section, I describe and analyse PSA teachers' pedagogical practices, as they expose children to pre-reading/writing.

7.3.1 Teachers' literacy habits

7.3.1.1 Preschool classroom literacy environment

In the light of the literature on the importance of a print-rich environment for children's EL development (Ch3.7.2), I hereunder describe PSA. PSA classroom contains 3 groups of tables (2 tables per group, one table for the older children and the other table for the younger children), each of which is supervised by a teacher. All the tables are at the centre of the classroom. The walls are covered with charts (ready made and produced by teachers - refer to **Appendix S** for full description) that are predominantly in English. There are also three boards, used to display the children's artwork: drawings, paintings and printings are displayed with their names (written by their teachers or themselves), the instruction for each activity, and the day and date. The physical display of materials is important for the TES, who often assesses teachers on the quantity and quality of charts and mobiles.



Photo 1: Print materials on walls



Photo 2: Print (English & French)

On the periphery of the classroom are the various 'corners':

- 1) The kitchen/doll corner contains kitchen utensils, mattresses and dolls;
- 2) The classroom library can accommodate 6 to 8 children at a time. It has open shelves (used to partition the classroom library away from the rest of the classroom), furnishings (a table, a bench and four chairs), open-faced and traditional bookshelves, library displays (ready-made charts, with songs and rhymes, on the wall) and props, all of which are identified as desirable features for the classroom library (Morrow & Weinstein, 1986 and Neuman & Roskos, 1992, cited in Neuman *et al.*, 2001: 9). There are between 100 and 150 books in English and French in the classroom library. PSA teachers do not totally agree on the language of the books, however. T1 says the books are in English and French; T2 says that most of the books are in English, but there are also French books; T3 says that the books are in English, French and maybe Kreol. This gives an indication of the extent of PSA teachers' familiarity with their own classroom library;
- 3) The shop corner contains boxes and cartons, which are available on the local market, for the children to play with;
- 4) There are also tables for the puzzles, games, pencils, colour pencils, scissors, paint, paint brushes....



Photo 3: Classroom library 1



Photo 4: Classroom library 2

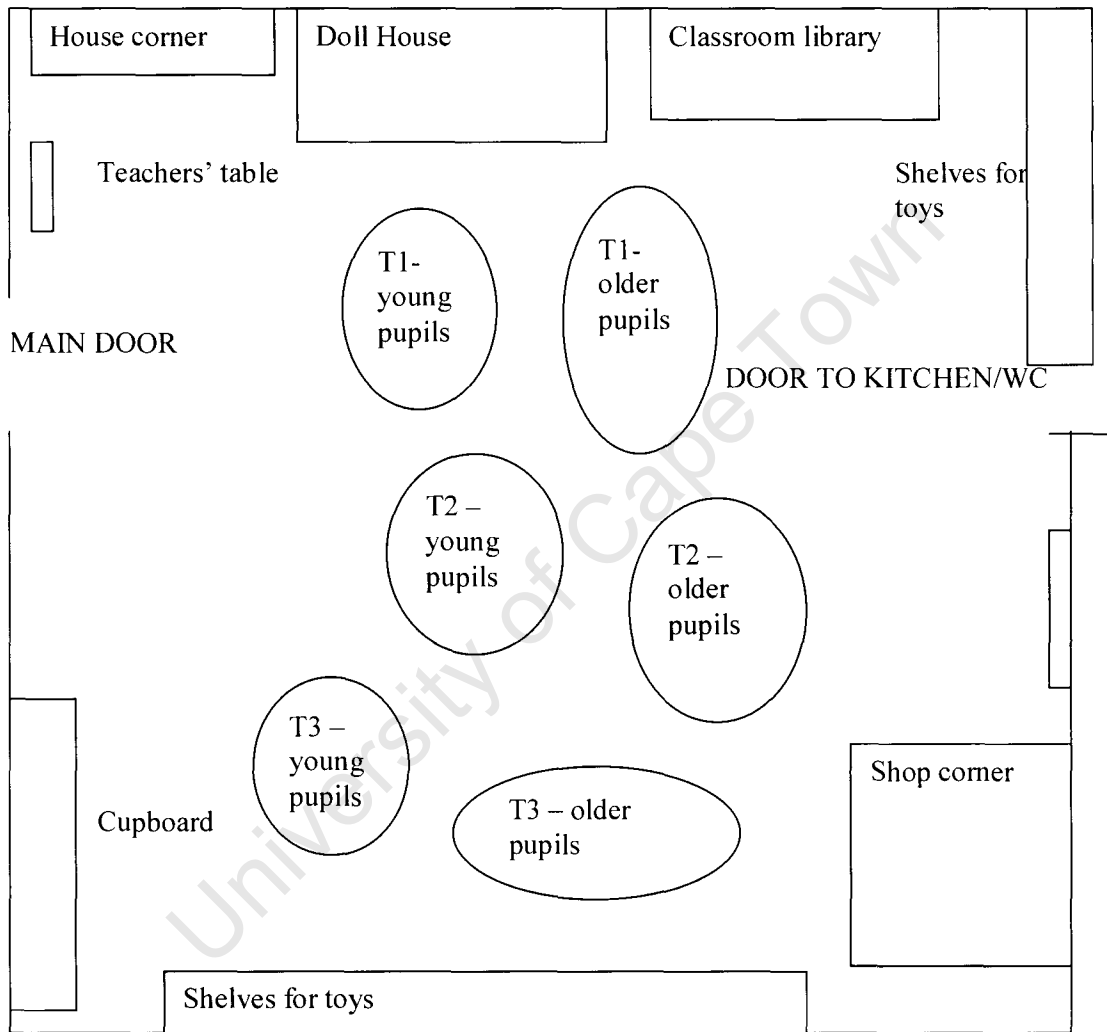
This description is confirmed by PSA teachers' own description of their classroom, as containing the following literacy materials:

- T1:
 - Books, apparatus, posters, cards with words, word and song charts, on the mobiles we write "C'est un poisson, sapin" [This is a fish, fir tree]
- T2:
 - Books, charts, paper when we write, children copy instructions...
- T3:
 - Books, puzzles, identification games, children draw and then write the words.

These replies, however, indicate that PSA teachers mostly perceive the materials related to the children's **work** as literacy-related materials. For PSA teachers, the **play** corners (the shop, doll and kitchen corners, which contain boxes with writing) were not perceived as containing literacy-related materials. This probably reveals the teachers' own perception that literacy is associated with the formal and the serious (school types of literacies), rather than with play (more functional types of literacies) in the local context.

Below is a plan of the classroom:

Figure 1: CLASSROOM PLAN



7.3.1.2 Teachers' modelling of reading and writing

It was observed that PSA teachers demonstrate the uses and functions of print in the classroom. On a daily basis, PSA teachers have been observed to make the roll call. They also sit down and write their notes during the first thirty minutes of class, while the children are engaged in free play, and they prepare the worksheets on loose pages of paper by hand (they do not have access to a photocopying machine). Before they start the morning whole-class assembly, teachers sit down round the teachers' table and hand-copy the worksheets, on top of which they often write the instruction for the activity (always in English), the day and date as well as the children's names.



Photo 5: Hand-made worksheet

On a less regular basis, PSA teachers have been observed to write their weekly plan (once a week); write down their request for absence leave; read a few newspaper articles on education, brought in by one of the teachers, at lunch-time; and write the lyrics of the songs which they were not totally familiar with (on one occasion, T1 wrote the words of a Kreol song on a small piece of paper and stuck it beside a chart). PSA teachers have also been observed to use a copybook to record important school events. For the June mini-outing and for the end-of-year lunch, a copybook was used to record financial contributions for the activities; for the mini concert organised for Music day, a copybook was used to record the name of the child and the song s/he would sing.

PSA teachers confirmed these observed activities and added a few more in the post-observation interviews: filling in admissions forms, writing letters to convene parents and teachers to meetings, writing reports on outings and writing minutes of meetings. The literacy activities described above are mostly documentary activities. They are part of the work procedures that are used to control, regulate and monitor workers (Watters, 1996: 87). In fact, these teacher-produced documents were regularly inspected by the TES at each of her visits. In her description of the uses of literacy, Heath (1986: 21) does not include the function of regulation and surveillance as being part of the functions of literacy practices. The Mauritian preschool is an example of the extent to which the uses and functions of literacy are context specific and culture bound. The Mauritian society thrives on excessive bureaucracy and paper work, and the use of literacy and the importance given to literacy in the school context reflect this.

7.3.2 Teachers' activities: Direct instruction

Under this code, two main types of activities were observed: those dealing with individual letters, and those dealing with whole words.

7.3.2.1 Letters

The weekly notes revealed a number of activity-types related to the teaching of individual letters: copying, modelling with dough, ringing, matching and filling in the blanks. The letters, which were directly taught over the year, are: A, B, C, D, E, O, M, and P (Refer to **Appendix T: T.1**). For each of the above activity-types, the daily notes are similarly worded. An example is included in Table 14.

Table 14: The alphabet: sample of daily notes

Date	Activity	Objective	Description
17.3.05	Writing	Copy letter 'd'	1) Children are around a table 2) Distribution of materials 3) They observe and copy 'd'

From the yearlong observations, it appears that the objective of the activities as articulated in the daily notes is, in fact, a description of the activities. Moreover, it was observed that while PSA teachers initially started teaching the alphabet (1) on a letter-by-letter basis, (2) in alphabetical order, (3) as a planned activity, they stopped on reaching letter 'e'. PSA teachers also taught a few more letters (M, P) in a more *ad hoc* manner during the rest of the year. These were taught as aside activities, carried out when the children had finished their class activity: children who had completed their worksheets were sometimes given a letter to copy on the reverse side of their worksheets or on a separate piece of cheap kitchen paper (while their worksheets were of good quality white photocopying paper).

Moreover, four incidents were collected as critical incidents over the year. The incidents indicate that through their daily contact⁵⁸ with preschool teachers, parents exert some form of pressure on them to teach their children the letters of the alphabet:

- 17 February 2005: T1 reported that parents put pressure on teachers to teach their children ABCD, sometimes as early as when they are 3, because parents are academically geared;
- 24 February 2005: PSA teachers were very upset because the father of one of their ex-pupils, now in Std1, reported that his daughter had been scolded by her Std1 teacher because she could not recognise and write all her letters;
- 17 March 2005: T3 stated that one of her students had been slapped at home because he could not write all his letters. She also said that a pupil's parents came to ask her whether she would teach their son to write his letters. She then explained to them that he could not even draw;
- 25 August 2005: T3 reported that the parents of 3-year olds sent double-line copybooks to school for their children to start learning to write their letters.

⁵⁸ Parents usually come to drop off their children in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon. There are also PTA meetings and a family outing where parents and teachers meet.

7.3.2.2 Words

Classroom observations reveal that PSA teachers systematically taught the children to write their own names, and then their surnames, through copying. PSA teachers also taught the children to write the words related to the daily theme by eliciting the (French or English one- or two-word) phrases they had taught the children before writing them on the drawings for the children to copy (**Appendix T.2**) and they wrote the same phrase (English/French) on all the children's drawings. Interestingly, there was an almost equal number of English and French written words over the year, which indicates PSA teachers' endeavour to introduce both English and French written forms. Moreover, while only the main English noun was written on drawings, French phrases (Determiner + Noun) were written on them: this is probably related to the fact that children are more familiar with French than English. It was also observed that PSA teachers did not elicit free (Kreol) discourse from the pupils with the purpose of writing it down. They also never wrote down the children's Kreol words and phrases to describe any of their drawings. Instead, they translated the children's words into French or English before writing them down. Finally, PSA teachers used copying, ringing and matching, respectively as the main strategies for teaching writing.

Over the year 2005, word copying was a very regular activity in PSA, and occurred within the structure of the daily group activity:

- 1) The teacher talks about one aspect of the theme being covered that week;
- 2) The teacher asks the pupils to make a drawing about one aspect of the theme discussed. PSA teachers are sometimes very precise about what the children should draw - guided drawing;
- 3) When the child has finished drawing, the teacher asks each child to describe what s/he has drawn - this aims to elicit the word (French or English) taught during the plenary session;
- 4) The teacher then writes down, for the child to copy, the word that the learner has provided or that is provided by the teacher in case the learner does not remember it (or gives the Kreol word).

down the column, down the page. Children appeared to enjoy this activity as it made them feel 'big'.

7.3.3 Teachers' activities: indirect instruction

7.3.3.1 'Functional literacy' activities

PSA teachers were observed to include what they call 'functional literacy' activities in their classroom. This activity, which appeared in the weekly plan four times during the year (25.3, 7.4, 23.5, 15.6), is described in the teachers' daily notes as:

Table 15: Daily plan: a 'functional literacy' activity

Date	Activity	Aim of activity	Procedures for activity
7.4.05	Writing	Functional literacy – child should be able to copy the sample	1) Children are around a table 2) Distribution of materials 3) They observe the box 4) They copy it



Photo 7: A 'functional literacy' activity



Photo 6: Copying the teacher's words

Photo 6 is a good example of the way in which PSA teachers juggle with biliteracy in class: while the instruction for the guided drawing is clearly in English “draw eggs under the hen”, the phrase then written by the teacher, which the child copies down, is in French “une poule”.

The post-observation interviews confirm the teachers' use of this copying strategy over the year (**Appendix N.4**) and reveal that that PSA teachers used the copying exercise for a number of functions: to develop learners' oral skills (through questioning), decoding skills (recognise letters) and writing skills (hand-eye movement and coordination). Interviews also indicate individual differences in teacher beliefs and teacher practices: while T1 and T2 were enthusiastic about the direct teaching of word writing and were ready to acknowledge that they did so, T3 seemed to have reservations about this approach.

It was also noted that in the last term, PSA teachers asked parents to send a double-lined copy book (this was also observed in PSB), in which they made the children copy the words that they would encounter in Std1, for instance, *man*, *woman*, *boy*, *girl*, *box*, *mug*. PSA teachers drew columns in the children's copybook, made a drawing on top of each column, with its English word written underneath it, and the children copied the word

An example of the carrying out of the activity is given in **Excerpt 14**:

Excerpt 14 Date: 7 April 2005 Small group activity Teacher has a few boxes in front of her, which she has taken from the shop corner		
T2:	C'est quoi ça?	What is this?
S:	Boîte du lait	Milk box
T2:	Comment on appelle ça du lait là?	How do you call that milk?
S:	Red Cow	Red Cow
T2:	Red Cow (Takes another box) Ca c'est quelle boîte?	Red cow. (Takes another box). What box is this?
S:	Boîte du lait	Milk box
T2:	Quel du lait ça? Comment on appelle ça? Qui connaît? Comment on appelle ça? On ne boit pas ça, non? Everyday, Everyday. Everyday veut dire 'Tous les jours'	What milk is this? How do you call it? Who knows? How do you call it? You don't drink that, do you? Everyday, Everyday. Everyday means 'every day'
The teacher then distributes the boxes to the children, asking them to draw the box, colour it and write exactly what is on the box.		

Apart from the boxes from the shop corner, PSA teachers have also been observed to take books from the classroom library, to carry out a similar activity (field notes - 23 May 2005). This activity is a variation of a 'copying' activity. According to T2, the aim of this 'functional literacy' activity is to make the children aware and teach them that there is print in their immediate environment.

7.3.3.2 Name writing

While PSA teachers write down the young children's names on their drawings, they encourage the older children to write down their own names on their work. For the older children, who took more time to learn how to write their names, PSA teachers gave them a name-copying activity.



Photo 8: Practising name writing

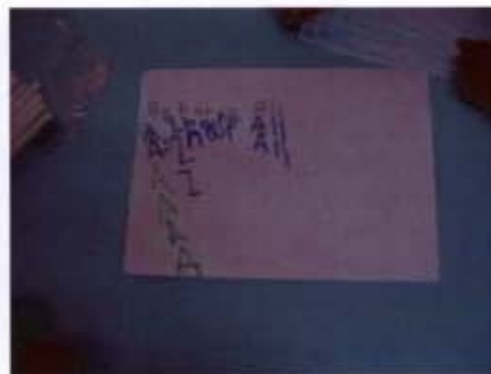


Photo 9: A child writing top-to-bottom

As seen in **Photo 9**, one of the children writes his name from top-to-bottom, rather than across the line, as he probably finds it easier to use the copying strategy and write the same letter each time. Done this way, the exercise loses some of its meaning.

7.3.4 Reading

7.3.4.1 The use of books

The classroom observations indicate that books were rarely used in the daily class and in small group activities in PSA. Three episodes, which revealed the use of books, are:

- 7 June 2005: T2 used a book to show the children the picture of a sea turtle;
- 27 June 2005: T1 used a book to read a short passage on crocodiles. Since the text was in French, the teacher read in French and then transliterated into Kreol;
- During one of the visits of the TFS, a teacher took the smaller children to the library and read them a book (French), while the older ones were doing their written Maths activity.

7.3.4.2 The 'library corner' activity

According to PSA teachers, the class library has a number of functions: to build a bond between the children and the book, to develop children's language, for illustrating, and for copying. 7 sessions of 'library corner' were scheduled over the year (8.4, 16.5, 1.7,

27.8, 28.8, 9.9, 19.9). These sessions are typically described in the daily notes as follows:

Table 16: Daily plan: 'library corner' activity

Date	Activity	Aim of activity	Procedures for activity
8.4.05	Reading-library corner	The child should be able to observe a book	1) Children are in library corner 2) They choose a book 3) Teacher explains how to turn the pages and how to take care of books

These library sessions were used primarily to make the children aware of how to correctly place the book in front of them, the direction in which to turn pages, and how to care for the book. In other words, these sessions presented the book as a physical object.

7.3.4.3 The storybook reading activity

The weekly plans indicate that 10 story-telling sessions were planned over the year and they were planned to occur approximately once a month (18.2, 25.2, 4.3, 2.5, 20.5, 3.6, 10.6, 17.6, 16.7, 29.10). For the first three sessions, specific stories were mentioned in the weekly plans: *Le Petit Poucet* (Tom Thumb), *Les Trois Petits Cochons* (The Three Little Pigs), and *The Three Little Pigs*, all children's classics. The remaining seven sessions only mentioned the story telling activity, without specifying the story to be read.

The daily plans typically describe the story telling activities as:

Table 17: Daily plan: story-telling activity

Date	Activity	Aim of activity	Procedures for activity
17.6.05	Story telling	Child should be able to listen and answer the questions	1) Children are in semi-circle 2) Teacher relates using a book 3) She asks questions while relating 4) Children answer

During the post-observation interviews, I asked PSA teachers how often they tell a story or read a story to the children in a typical week. T1 said “every Friday”, T2 said “one to two times a week,” and T3 said “once a month”. As well as not agreeing with each other on the frequency of reading sessions, the teachers’ claims did not tally with their weekly plans. Despite the official presence of 10 storybook sessions in the weekly plan and the PSA teachers’ claim to engage in fairly regular storybook reading, it was observed that the scheduled weekly storybook reading sessions did not always take place. For instance, on one of my visits (field notes - 3 May 2005), I enquired which story had been read in the scheduled reading session (programmed on the eve). T1 explained that they had not had time for the story session as the eve had been the first school day after the Easter break. On another visit (field notes - 12 July 2005), I asked T3 the story she was planning to read that Friday. She mentioned that weekly plans are generally flexible and that they might actually not have the time to read to the children that week. Finally, in the post-test, I used *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Ladybird Collection, Level 1) to test concepts of print. One question I asked to all PSA children was “when Miss reads a book for you...” (asked in Kreol). To this question, one pupil (field notes - 13 October 2005) said, “Miss does not read for us.” So I reformulated my question as, ‘If Miss reads this book for you...” (asked in Kreol).

Since my regular weekly visits to PSA did not coincide with a story reading session, I arranged with T1 to attend the story reading session scheduled for Friday 30 September 2005. I here acknowledge that interpreting a story reading session carried out at my request is methodologically limited and therefore, needs to be interpreted with extra caution. However, since I wanted to observe the language used by the teacher to tell the story and the interaction between teacher and pupil, I was confident that the immediacy of the context would be more powerful than any preparation for the story reading session might have been. The sequence of that storybook reading activity is as follows:

- ✦ T1 went to the library corner, selected a book *Blanche Neige et les Sept Nains* (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*), a classic fairy tale: the teacher’s choice of French for the story-reading activity was confirmed at the post-observation

interview, where the three teachers stated that they usually use French to tell stories. T1 says that English storybooks are hardly used because the need for translation makes that the story reading activity is not enjoyed by the children. She also added that if teachers do read an English book, they have to use hand gestures, or explain in French and Kreol, also they can read only three pages at a time, otherwise the activity becomes too long for the children;

- T1 took her group of pupils (n=14) for the story-reading session, while the rest of the class (n=38) carried on with the class activities in the same classroom: the noise was audible;
- Since there was not enough room for all the children in the classroom library, the children were required to move their chairs and place them in a semi-circle in a corner of the classroom;
- T1 started with asking the children if they knew any stories and if their parents ever read to them: most of them said they were never read to from a book at home, and some said that they were told stories; two children mentioned *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*The Little Red Riding Hood*) and *Pinocchio*; one child said that he was read to at home, and he was able to retell the story of *Les Trois Petits Cochons* (*The Three Little Pigs*) at the teacher's request;
- Placing the fairly small storybook on her lap during the whole session, T1 read the story. During the reading session, T1 recurrently switched to Kreol to interpret the story. She also regularly stopped to ask questions (in French and Kreol) in order to check whether the children had understood. After she had read one third of the story, which took some 20 minutes, the children were no longer concentrating. So she said that she would read the rest of the story the coming Tuesday.

It is interesting to note that in setting up the children round her in a semi-circle and in changing the tone of her voice as she was imitating the step-mother, she was abiding by the tips mentioned in the TTM: "The teacher as story-teller: seating arrangement; role play story, hold book for children to see; do not interrupt story reading session, allow

children to choose books, have as many story reading/telling times as possible in the day” (C3: 42). This ‘by the book’ approach might have been driven by my request for a reading session and my presence in the classroom. However, despite the planning of the activity, it seems to me that the language used during the reading session, Kreol, was most natural. This natural kind of language behaviour indicates that my presence might not have significantly impacted on the teacher’s language choice and her use of code-switching during reading session.

7.4 Discussion

The main observations made in Ch7.3 and which call for explanation, are that PSA teachers:

- surround children with print, but rarely make reference to this print (Ch7.4.1);
- engage children in literacy-related activities, which are associated with the school literacies (Ch7.4.2);
- practise a ‘copying culture’ (Ch7.4.3);
- rarely read story books for the children (Ch7.4.4);

In the light of the above synthesis, the coming sub-sections will attempt to address SRQ(v).

7.4.1 Surrounded by print

In structural terms, the physical lay out of PSA classroom qualifies it as a print-rich environment. This indicates PSA teachers’ response to the teacher-training course, which emphasises the need for an EL approach to literacy instruction (Ch5.3.3). However, fundamental questions about the nature and use of the print-rich environment need to be addressed.

7.4.1.1 Use made of the print-rich environment in PSA

Clark & Kragler (2006) and Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) argue that the availability of print and writing materials impact positively on children’s literacy development. However, observations in PSA might lead me to argue that the print-rich environment has

a ‘cosmetic’ purpose in PSA. The observations indicate that (1) although children were made to copy the words that describe their drawings, little reference was made to the children’s own writing after the activity; (2) although the classroom was full of charts, they were not usually referred to, they were part of the setting; and (3) although the classroom library is well furnished with books, PSA teachers made little functional use of the books. One striking example is that PSA teachers did not use a book each time they worked on a theme.

Even if PSA teachers have been trained to immerse the children in print, this training seems to have failed to train teachers to make meaningful use of this print in the day-to-day class experience. It seems to me that the paradoxical language situation, where children speak Kreol and the languages of the print are English and French, is one factor hindering PSA teachers from making regular reference to the environmental print. The consequence of this paradoxical situation is that the communicative and meaningful capacity of written messages is undermined. Furthermore, since written language is associated with the European languages, and not the language of the environment, it sends “Powerful messages [...] to children and adults alike about the relative status of different languages via the print in the environment” (Bloch, 1999: 43). Finally written language is associated with formal education, with serious learning activities, and not with functional, enjoyable activities.

7.4.1.2 The relationship with the book

Even if PSA has a well-furnished classroom library, there is evidence that PSA children are initiated into a very superficial relationship with the book. While the ‘library corner’ activity aims to demonstrate to the preschoolers the value of books, it socialises them into treating the book as an *objet d’art*, as an object to be handled with care, hence downplaying the fact that books need to be cared for precisely because their contents make them worth caring for, and that books can be used for information, for learning, as well as for enjoyment. The ‘library corner’ activity, as well as the ‘functional literacy’ activity, builds admiration and respect for the form of the book, while conversely

downplaying their substance, meaning and contents. Gregory (1996: 30) uses the term “talismanic value of the book” to describe a Chinese boy’s relationship with the book, and she argues that this sacred relationship is cultural. This sacred relationship with books might be explained by the fact that books are costly in Mauritius.

7.4.2 Didactic nature of the print

The print materials surrounding PSA children and the print-related activities they are exposed to, tend to be overtly didactic in nature. The children’s artwork is proof that the children have done their class assignments/worksheets/free drawings in teacher-controlled activities. The writing on the charts, when it is referred to, is used to teach words or concepts to the children. The corners are used mainly at the time of free play, when the children play together in the corners with no guidance from the teachers. Hence, the functional use of literacy is not obvious to the children. Banda’s (2003: 127) suggestion that everyday literacies (consulting a calendar, making a shopping list) be used as a way to access literacy skills does not seem to be part of the culture at PSA. Pleasurable storybook reading is also not part of PSA daily, or weekly, routine. Moreover, PSA teachers’ own literacy practices, to which the children are exposed, are systematically associated with a formal environment: the work place, the school. Conversely, children are made to copy letters and words as an everyday practice. Although one learns to spell by copying, such an activity does not foreground the importance and use of writing for authentic purposes.

Although I would not go as far as to say that the literacy related activities carried out in PSA are decontextualised, that they are not situated in “communities of practice” (Gee, 2000b: 50), I would argue that literacy is essentially associated with the formal, the institutional, the school. Very early in the education system, PSA children are socialised into approaching literacy in a very serious, dry and academic way, downplaying the more functional, pleasurable and creative purposes of literacy.

7.4.3 Pre-writing

The pre-writing activities that PSA children were engaged in at the preschool suggest a 'copying culture' and showed an absence of observed invented spelling practices.

7.4.3.1 The absence of the whole language approach to writing

In the case of pre-writing, the curriculum and TTM favour the whole language/language experience approach (Ch5.3). This approach, where learners provide the text to the teacher through dictation, has been used with L1 readers as well as beginning SL readers (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005: 275). In this sub-section I analyse some of the factors that impinge on the use of the whole language approach to writing in PSA.

As it is formulated in the documents, teachers are encouraged to use the children's L1 when introducing children to pre-writing: "If the children say what is taking place in the drawing, and this is written under their drawing, in their own precise words, (without being subjected to an approximate translation by the educator), then the purpose of motivation for writing will have been achieved." (2003PPG: 41). However, this approach to writing was not observed among PSA teachers or learners (nor in any of the schools visited during the pilot study), despite the fact that PSA learners are all native speakers of Kreol and spontaneously use Kreol to communicate, describe and narrate.

It seems to me that the reason for PSA teachers' inability to use the whole language/language experience approach in the classroom is intricately related to the fact that this approach implies that teachers would need to write down the children's Kreol words to produce learner-initiated, creative texts. Since PSA teachers have themselves never been taught to read and write in Kreol in Mauritius, PSA teachers probably find it hard to write, and even to spell in Kreol. This practical difficulty might be exacerbated by their negative attitudes to Kreol as language of literacy, attitudes that would make them feel insecure and uncomfortable with writing in Kreol - PSA teachers expressed their reservations about L1 literacy and L1 education in the post-observation interviews. By way of comparison, it might be interesting to refer to Bloch's project in South Africa,

the Concentrated Language Encounter (Bloch, 2000: 198), where children are allowed to retell a story that the teacher then writes on a chart for them to copy. However, the major distinction between South Africa and Mauritius is that in the former, African languages are official media of literacy, whereas Kreol is not so clearly and forcefully so in Mauritius.

As for using the whole language/language experience approach to teach English literacy in Mauritius, I refer Wurr (2002) who points out that this approach assumes some level of oral proficiency in the language being written. Hence, using the whole language approach with language learners is a challenge. He nonetheless suggests that it can be used if the teacher works towards creating a cooperative and supporting learning environment. This can only be achieved with teacher training, which Mauritian preschool teachers do not have. The South African Battswood Project (Alexander & Bloch, 2003) is one example of the use made of the whole language approach for second language teaching. In this project, conditions were created for biliteracy (English and Xhosa) to flourish, through the creation of multilingual print-rich classrooms, the use of reading materials in Xhosa in the classroom alongside English, the display of songs and rhymes in both languages, and the provision of opportunities for purposeful and authentic writing for the children. Evidence of the children's writing does indicate that the children do develop writing skills. However, using such a whole language approach as used in the Battswood Project, with PSA children would appear a mammoth task for teachers given that the local context does not support a Kreol/English biliterate development of children. Moreover, Mauritian teachers would need specialised training on using this approach with child beginner language learners (PSA children) who have a low level of oral English proficiency they start their final preschool year (Ch9.4.2, Table 25).

I would like to conclude this discussion on the use of the whole language approach by referring to David Rose's (2005) work with aborigines learning English in Australia. Rose is fairly critical of whole language approaches with language learners, because

according to him, “whole language approaches attempt to avoid complexity by treating texts as undifferentiated lakes of meaning for learners to immerse in” (p. 145-146). He thus uses the principles underlying whole language approaches by employing shared reading as a crutch for children from an oral background to become readers. For Rose, during shared reading, young language learners are exposed to a simple vocabulary through repeated readings of appropriate texts from which they can derive meaning in context. The next step, for Rose, is to make learners recognise individual words, using the word recognition strategy, as a stepping-stone to spelling. For Rose, the sequence of literacy development is from meaning to wording to lettering. The wealth of Rose’s work is that it considers reading from a more inclusive perspective, which emphasises the importance of moving top-down in the development of reading for comprehension while acknowledging the importance of a bottom-up perspective, where the knowledge of the alphabet and recognition of words are seen as supporting and facilitating decoding and reading for sense. It seems to me that Rose’s approach, which emphasises meaning, might be explored in the local context since Mauritian children are already taught to read in English using largely the look-and-say method, which is a word recognition strategy. However, what seems to be lacking in Mauritius is the fact that meaning is not foregrounded enough. Rose’s work contributes to enlightening the Mauritian context as how to use word-recognition in a meaning-making endeavour through extensive and scaffolded shared reading.

7.4.3.2 The ‘copying’ culture

The absence of the top-down, whole language/language experience approach in the language classroom, as favoured by the teacher training manuals (Ch5.3), is replaced by a more timid bottom-up, skills-based approach, which involves the ‘copying letters and words’ types of activity (Ch3.6.3). In the post-interview, PSA teachers explained that they made scarce use of the skills-based approach because they had received instructions from the PSTF to avoid teaching letters of the alphabet and avoid making children copy individual letters in a parrot-like fashion. However, T1 and T2 readily stated that they engage in the direct teaching of the alphabet and in the copying of discrete

letters/words/names, because they believe in the benefits of this strategy. T3 was more hesitant to make such a claim: she said that when she worked at other schools, children were not taught the letters of the alphabet at all. It is only when she came to PSA that she observed the teachers doing so, so she participated in the activities, sharing the same worksheets as the two other teachers. This indicates that there are individual differences among preschool teachers (Chavez, 2006), differences that are not fully addressed here as they are outside the scope of this research.

Although it is true that learning to write is done through copying, Garton & Pratt (1998: 155) argue that the traditional approach to writing can lead children to develop strange notions about the reasons for writing. Since the traditional approach to writing instruction entails recopying, there is a lack of creativity in written language production. Through over reliance on copying, writing can lose some of its sense and value. Such an approach is also equated with school literacy: when writing, learners are practising letters/words in tightly controlled school activities. Such practices have a limited functional use: these practices associated with writing reduce the child to a passive recipient, who is only expected to copy and repeat what s/he sees. This is clearly exemplified in some children writing their names from top to bottom, when asked to copy their names (Ch7.3.3, **Photo 9**). Students are not initiated into exploring the purposes of the ‘texts’ they are made to ‘write/copy’: this writing activity type is **not** embedded in the social activities of everyday life (Currie & Cray, 2004). The writing system is thus brought down to a “school subject, divorced from its social purposes and functions” (Ferreiro, 1992: 149).

Garton & Pratt (1998: 160) propose that learning to write consists of a diverse range of skills and understandings: (1) early distinctions (child distinguishes a drawing from writing), (2) letter formation and printing skills, (3) functions of the written word, and (4) putting the message into writing. The data here suggest that the subjects might not go beyond the development of basic skills described in the first two stages.

7.4.3.3 The absence of invented spelling

Read against the literature on emergent writing, the data from PSA revealed that the children's writing development lacked experiments with invented spelling (Wilde, 1991, cited in Kamii *et al.*, 2001; Lipson & Wixson, 2004: 36),⁵⁹ and that the students did not explore the relationship between letter form and sound, which is a 'normal' stage in the development of literacy and writing in L1 language learners and which promotes phonics knowledge and skill. Kress (2000: 7) makes the distinction between writing and spelling. He says that while the former tends to be the children's interest and focus, the latter tends to be the school's interest. The data here suggest that the school's interest overwhelms the child's interest, and the child is socialised into becoming a school subject. In fact, one can say that PSA teachers do not encourage students to experiment with and explore the conventions of writing through creative writing. This, however, cannot be taken out of context as, "Spelling is not about fashion, but about the anxieties produced by wider and deeper social, cultural and economic factors" (Kress, 2000: 7). Since teachers form part of a culture where exams are important avenues of advancement, they perpetuate the practice of spelling correctly as from preschool level.

7.4.4 Near absence of storybook reading

The 10 planned storybook reading sessions in PSA by large under-represent the "daily storybook reading" mentioned in the TTM, they under-represent the teachers' (T1 and T2) claim of the number of story reading sessions they have over the year, and they under-represent a practice considered a standard daily activity in developed countries. Conversely, these 10 planned storybook reading sessions probably over-represent the actual storybook reading sessions that were realised over the year. This general 'poverty' of storybook reading activities, which appears to be a fairly general phenomenon across

⁵⁹ A primary school teacher (p.c.) said that allowing children to practise invented spelling would give them the wrong habits. It is possible that the behaviouristic frame of mind influences teachers in what they encourage (or not) their pupils to do with their budding writing skills. This absence of invented spelling was also noticed in Ghanaian classes (Lipson & Wixson, 2004: 36).

the preschools I visited during my pilot study⁶⁰ and in South African preschools (Bloch, 1999: 53), limits the usual interactions with language behaviours typical of storybook sessions (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). This does not mean that PSA teachers are not aware that they should read: the fact that they include storybook reading activities in their official weekly plan, and the fact they claimed to be reading more often than they actually did, indicate that they are aware of the importance of reading and of the necessity for them to read story books for the children.

In the fairly limited literature on reading practices in the developing world, the lack of a “reading culture... [which] is understood to mean the art of inculcating reading habits and interest in learners through conducive reading environments and copious reading activities” (Olaofe, 2003: 96) is often cited as the major umbrella factor influencing reading practices, and various reasons are cited to explain this phenomenon. These reasons are mentioned below, and are discussed with relevance to the Mauritian preschool context, with special focus on PSA.

7.4.4.1 The lack of an adequate number of books in the school libraries

The lack of an adequate number of books in the school libraries (Arua & Lederer, 2003: 28; Egbe & Uwatt, 2003: 113; Greaney, 1996: 22) has been mentioned as one factor contributing to limited reading in classrooms. This literature also indicates that students’ access to a library and to books is beneficial to learners’ literacy development. While Neuman *et al.* (2001: 9) say that children are more likely to use books and participate in book-related activities when there is a special place to enjoy them, Elley (1991) states that the presence of a sufficient number of books in a library is a central pre-requisite for pupils’ reading, or for teachers reading to pupils. According to Krashen (2002, 2003a) and Morrow (2003), students in classrooms with libraries read 50% more books than

⁶⁰ In the 6 preschools I visited during my pilot study in 2004 and which included two full-day visits at each pre-school, I witnessed only one story reading session. In that session, the teacher had selected a French book from the class library and had read the story to all the pupils in class (approximately 30). The session had been punctuated by regular reading from the book, and concurrent translation into and interpretation in Kreol. The storybook reading activity had thus been a fairly long and tedious activity, for both the teacher and the children. My regular visits in PSB also indicated that storybook reading was not a daily (or even regular) activity.

students in classrooms without them. Access to classroom libraries is even more important for English language learners (Chambliss & McKillop, 2000, cited in Vardell *et al.*, 2006).

Although the classroom/school library is an important part of the school and educational culture in developed countries, it has been noted that access to books in developing countries is scarce. For instance, in many African schools, the lack of reading materials is a serious problem, with some 80% of schools not having libraries at all (Garson, 1998 cited in Murray, 2002: 442). Similarly, Banda (2003: 123) describes the lack of library/reading materials in black/rural communities/schools, arguing that this culminates in a poverty of literacy stimuli so that learners from these areas are often found not to have the kinds of schooled literacies required for educational discourses (Banda *et al.*, 1998; Gough, 2000; Gough & Bock, 2001), and this has implications for early literacy development and also literacy practices associated with academic discourse in general (Francis, 2000). Focusing more specifically on South African preschool classrooms, Bloch (2000b: 193) says that the majority of South African ECD classrooms are not places where one might expect to find many storybooks, because books are understood to be peripheral rather than central to early literacy development and because most teachers have been trained to teach reading without using books at all. It is in the context of the importance of the access to books for literacy development and the lack of access to books in developing countries that we need to assess the absence of storybook reading in PSA. Does the lack of storybooks explain why PSA teachers do not read to children on a regular basis?

The lack of storybooks could, indeed, readily explain why PSA teachers do not read on a regular basis for the children. However, PSA has a classroom library with between 100 and 150 books.⁶¹ On 25 February 2005 (field notes), T1 mentioned that the library books

⁶¹ The preschools visited during the pilot study all displayed attractive books in the classroom library. Furthermore, at the beginning of the year, a sponsor offered Rs 5 000 worth of books to PSB. I personally drove the three teachers to the bookshop, and they chose and bought books, which they found relevant for their preschool classroom. Over my yearlong visit, I failed to observe the regular use of the books in the library of PSB. Many of the attractively displayed books remained quite new by the end of the year in both PSA and PSB.

were fairly used up and that she was waiting for new books from the PSTF. On several visits, she reiterated her concern about the absence of new books. Since the books had still not arrived in May, I proposed to buy new books for the library. On 31 May 2005, I drove T1 to the nearby bookshop and she personally chose Rs 2 515 worth of books and cassettes for the children. The books included picture books, classical French and English fictions and a few big books. On my next visit (field notes -7 June 2005), I noted that the books had been attractively displayed in the library corner. However, the rest of my visits to PSA did not show any significant difference in the utilisation of the books. If books were used, they were mainly used for the 'functional literacy' activities and during children's free time when some went to play in the library.

To come back to the number of books in PSA classroom library, it is interesting to refer to the IRA (1999b) position statement, which indicates that by Euro-American standards, that there should be 7 books per child in a class library. In this context, PSA (n= 52) can be said to have a well-enough-furnished library for a developing country. In this sense, Mauritius cannot be said to fit in the developing country paradigm, where the term "book famine" (Walter, 1996: 133) has been used to describe the extreme scarcity of reading materials. However, the data from PSA suggest that the presence of books in a library does not necessarily ensure that the pupils and teachers will actually read the books, develop a reading habit, or a reading culture. A study carried out by Auleear Owodally (2005) among Std5 pupils in PSA and PSB indicated that the presence of a school library does not mean the (regular) use of it by students. Similarly, Commeyras & Inyega (2007: 269), who research in Kenya, also say that the availability of instructional materials and resources does not guarantee regular use. Dlamini's (2003) experiment with secondary school pupils in Swaziland - where she provided access to library books - also indicated that despite having access to library books, the pupils failed to develop a reading culture. Dlamini suggests that the experiment failed because it was carried out too late in the pupils' lives and hypothesises that the same should be carried out with younger, primary school children for a reading culture to develop. The PSA experience is an example of a situation where preschool teachers are literate, are provided with adequate libraries, and

have young enough children to develop a reading culture, and yet fail to do so. This shows the difference between illiteracy, the inability to read, and alliteracy, the absence of reading.

7.4.4.2 The appropriateness of the books

It has been argued that failure to read can be associated with the inappropriateness of the reading materials for the classroom library. Some of these factors are discussed below, in relation to PSA teachers' experience (as well as to PSB teachers and other preschool teachers observed during the pilot study).

The failure to read has been associated with books, which are **linguistically unsuitable**. Elley (1996) has observed that a number of libraries in the developing world lack story books in the readers' L1. This is the case in PSA, where the classroom library is full of French and English books, languages that are second or foreign to the children, but contains almost no storybooks in Kreol. This situation at the level of the preschool class library in fact reproduces the state of affairs in Mauritian libraries, which are full of books in European languages but lack books in Kreol. Although practical reasons (unavailability of Kreol books, compared to the availability of English/French books), attitudinal reasons (positive attitudes to European languages compared to Kreol) and financial reasons (it is economically safer for bookshops to invest in English/French books than it would be to invest in Kreol books because of limited readership in Kreol) can explain this state of affairs, this situation nevertheless implies that children have access to books in languages which are second/foreign to them. Such a situation is not atypical of African contexts. For instance, Banda (2003) says that when there are more materials in English than in the local languages outside the classroom, it fuels the perceptions of English being the power language and hence "the key to genres of power" and Bloch and Edwards (1999) claim that there are warehouses full of children's books in African languages in South Africa, which nobody wants or can afford to buy. Consequently, this situation fuels the perception that European languages are the languages of literacy, and thus the key to genres of power.

The **inappropriateness of the books for the pupils' age** is another factor that can impinge on story reading in the preschool. Dumea's (2003) *Children's Book Project* has indicated that age level books should be found in the school library. The French and English story books in PSA seem to be of a level that would be hard for the children to understand without translation into Kreol and interpretation. The description of T1 reading a story to PSA children, and my own participation in the quasi-experiment in PSB showed the unsuitability of these books. In fact, I found myself having to take pictures of my daughter and write stories in simple English about things and activities that the children were familiar with (Photo Library PSB). The only other international books that I could use were: Ladybird's Level 1 *The Ugly Duckling* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, and the Hill's *Spot Collection*.

It might also be the case that the books in PSA are **physically unattractive**. Egbe & Uwatt's (2003) *Karatu Big Book Production Experience* has shown that big books are suitable to raise children's interest, to build a positive attitude towards reading and eventually to cultivate a reading habit among children. PSA had very few big books, and the few they had were in English, hence not appropriate to the children's level of understanding.

Finally, books that are **culturally insensitive** can have an effect on them being used in classrooms. Greaney (1996: 25) quotes evidence (Alemna, 1982; Bunanta, 1993; Osa, 1986) that suggests that the book contents are often at odds with the readers' cultural background. Since the large majority of books in PSA classroom library were imported from Britain, India (books written in English, imported from India are cheaper) and France, their contents tend to be culturally distant from the realities of life of Mauritian children.

My analysis of the storybooks in PSA classroom library suggests that they might be linguistically and culturally inappropriate for Kreol L1-speaking children. It is also

apparent that PSA teachers are unable to use these books creatively, possibly because they have not been trained to use English/French books with Kreol-L1 speaking children.

7.4.4.3 Attitudes to Kreol books

Although there were a couple of Kreol storybooks in PSA, it was noted that they were lost in the library and that they were not scheduled in the storybook reading sessions. On 25 August 2005, the teachers presented me a book with stories in Kreol that they had been offered by the PSTF to read to the children: *Sa bann pli zoli zistwar: Ses plus belles histoires*⁶² by Fanfan, a popular local séga singer. An analysis of the 73-page long book indicates the presence of 11 stories (in French and Kreol), 6 full page painted etchings, 5 half/part-page etchings, and 5 part-page sketches. PSA teachers expressed their reserve about the book, because:

- The language is vulgar: PSA teachers attracted my attention to the phrase ‘deryer lichien’ (pg. 16), which means ‘dog’s arse’;
- They think that it is not to the level of the children in terms of complexity of language;
- There are too many stories;
- There are not enough illustrations;
- They feel they have no competence in reading in Kreol, since they have received no training on how to read Kreol books to children.

Hence, this book was not judged worthy to be placed in the library or to be utilised.

In the post-observation interviews, PSA teachers were asked to enumerate the criteria they would use to choose books for the school library:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| T1: | • Well-illustrated, easy words, short, interesting stories |
| T2: | • Appropriate for the child’s age, big writing, well illustrated, colourful, drawings, hard cover |
| T3: | • Hard cover, easy words that the children use and that describe what they can see |

⁶² The title of the book is in Kreol: French, and is translated as “His most beautiful stories”.

It is significant to note that the closest the teachers came to the language issue was with respect to simple and easy language, with none of the teachers mentioning the possibility of having books in the L1 in the classroom library. This reflects the teachers' negative attitudes to storybook reading in Kreol.

7.4.4.4 The role of teachers

The literature review (Ch3.7.2) proposed that teachers' literacy habits might influence their classroom practices. It seems that one other reason for which PSA teachers do not regularly read to the children is that they do not have a personal reading culture themselves. During my visits at PSA, PSA teachers would often discuss what they cooked, what radio programmes they listened to in the afternoon while cooking and what soap opera or film they watched. However, they rarely discussed what they read. Their reading seems to have been limited to newspapers, and for T2, her children's school textbooks. During the interview, PSA teachers were asked a few questions about their own literacy practices at home (Appendix N.5), which revealed that:

- The newspaper is the most popularly read material (this is similar in Africa, according to Pretorius & Machet, 2004: 54);
- PSA teachers hardly read for pleasure;
- They sometimes read materials related to their profession, but they did so when they were following the teacher training course;
- They sometimes buy storybooks for their children, and sometimes read for them;
- They write mainly for functional purposes (shopping lists, cards, recipes).

This apparent lack of interest in reading might also explain why teachers do not make their own storybooks, the other reasons being the time, money and energy they would have to invest in the activity. Schlebusch & Thobedi (2004: 41) also observe that educators in South Africa do not want to buy or create their own support materials in ESL classrooms, expecting the MoE to supply the materials.

It seems to me that PSA teachers' personal literacy habits possibly results in their failure to model positive attitudes to reading and positive reading habits. This can have an adverse effect on their pupils (Arua, 1992, cited in Arua & Lederer, 2003: 28).

7.4.4.5 The role of parents

The literature review highlighted the important role of parents in inculcating a reading culture in their children in developed countries. Although I will analyse the parents' reading habits in the coming chapter (Ch8.3.2), I will just refer to one incident that revealed the limited storybook reading practices in the home. In the story reading session (30 September 2005), T1 asked her pupils whether their parents read to them at home. Only one out of the fourteen pupils said that his mother read to him. The others said that their parents did not read to them, and some said that their parents told them stories.

7.5 Summary of the chapter

The main findings emerging from PSA classroom observations and teacher interviews (Ch7.3), which address **SRQ(iv)**, are summarised below:

- PSA is characterised by a physical display of literacy-related materials, which would qualify it as a print-rich environment;
- PSA teachers tend to model literacy practices as serious activities and they rarely immerse learners in an environment where literacy is used for pleasurable and immediate functional purposes;
- PSA teachers tend to employ direct techniques to expose children to pre-reading/writing, by frequently making their pupils copy words/their names, and more rarely the letters of the alphabet;
- There was no evidence of phonological awareness activities, and this can be understood in the context where the children will learn to read and write using the 'look and say' method in Std1;
- Storybook reading, which is a common preschool activity in developed countries, is an infrequent activity in PSA, possibly because of social and linguistic reasons.

In an attempt to address **SRQ(v)**, Ch7.4 has considered the extent to which observed pedagogical practices related to pre-reading/writing are possibly influenced by teachers' beliefs, training, use of materials and their own literacy practices. The main points emerging from the data interpretation are:

- **Teachers' beliefs:** In their endeavour to teach pre-reading/writing, it seems that PSA teachers believe in the importance of introducing the children to the formal conventions of print before they go to Std1. However, they are constrained by the instructions from the PSTF and the teacher-training they have undergone;
- **Inadequate teacher training:** Ch5.4 had indicated that the theoretical nature of the teacher-training programme does not provide teachers with the pedagogical tools to teach effectively in the local context. In the case of pre-reading/writing, teachers are told to use the whole language/language experience approach, but this approach seems to pose practical problems to PSA teachers. As for storybook reading, teachers have not been trained to read in French/English to native-speakers of Kreol;
- **Inappropriateness of materials:** Although the classroom library is full of English/French books, many of the books are linguistically and culturally inappropriate for 4 - and 5 - year olds who are native speakers of Kreol;
- **The local literacy culture:** PSA teachers form part of a literacy culture, where reading is associated with the formal sphere of education, rather than with the pleasurable. Hence, PSA teachers practise reading sparsely, and this might come in the way of their role modelling for their learners.

CHAPTER 8

Home literacy experiences in a foreign language context

8.1 Introduction

The literature review (Ch3.7.1) revealed that in many communities, literacy practices are embedded within the social fabric of family life, with children being exposed to literacy before coming to school. The aim of this chapter is to address **SRQ(vi - ix)**:

Regarding preschoolers' home experiences,

SRQ (vi): What constitutes their language background?

SRQ (vii): To what extent are they exposed to oral English in the home?

SRQ (viii): To what kinds of literacy experiences are they exposed?

SRQ (ix): What are parents' beliefs and expectations, when it comes to doing English and pre-reading/writing in the preschool?

I have kept this data for the latter part this thesis because:

- 1) The focus of my work is the classroom: the importance of the home environment is here acknowledged, but it remains tangential to my main research interests;
- 2) The data for this chapter were collected from parents from PSA and PSB (subjects of the quasi-experimental design, **Phase 3**): the analysis of the data has preceded Ch9, which compares the learning experiences of PSA and PSB children.

8.2 Data collection and data analysis procedures

8.2.1 Data collection

As detailed in Ch4.4.5, data were collected from the children's mothers, so as to have an idea of the home experiences of all children-subjects. A structured questionnaire (**Appendix J**) guided the telephone interviews, which were carried out in October-November 2005 (at the end of classroom observations), so as to reduce the possibility of data corruption. I did not want to run the risk of mothers adopting certain language and

literacy behaviours during the year of observation as a result of the interview questions, had it been carried out prior to classroom observations. When I called mothers, I systematically presented myself as somebody involved in research with a view to improving preschool education, and as a parent myself, in order to build rapport with the interviewed mothers. Mothers tended to be very enthusiastic at being asked questions.

8.2.2 Procedures for data analysis

For the quantitative data, the typology emerging from literature review on HLE was used. The literature reviewed in Ch3.7.1 differentiates among parental demographics, parents' literacy habits, parents' activities: direct instruction, and parents' activities: indirect instruction. Most of the data were quantified using simple statistical measures (frequency and averages).

For the qualitative data, notes from the questions eliciting mother's comments, opinions and beliefs, were taken down as field notes. The field notes were then transcribed in a separate word document, and noted as referring to the respective children for easy reference. This qualitative data were analysed using inductive analysis: codes were allowed to emerge from the data. Probably because of the mothers' level of education and their lifestyle, their comments tended to be brief (refer to **Appendix L.4 Tables (18, 19, 20, 22)**).

8.3 Presentation of the data

8.3.1 Language background

Mothers were asked to specify the language(s) they usually speak with a number of actors to have an idea of the language(s) that form part of their own and their children's immediate environments. The data (**Appendix L.2**) reveal that although both Kreol and French are used to address the children (50% of the mothers claimed to use Kreol and French, or French only with their children), Kreol predominates in the informal circle, comprising the family and neighbours. Mothers also claim to use either Kreol, Kreol/French, or French with the preschool teachers. Apart from two mothers who mentioned using English with their husbands for the purposes of secrecy, no parent

mentioned using English at home. This confirms the census data and the MLA (1996: 55) findings from Grade4 pupils that over 90% of the subjects do not speak English in Mauritius.

8.3.2 Parents' literacy habits

8.3.2.1 Books for adults

Table 18: Books for adults in the home

	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
Do you have books for adults at home?	54 % (7) - Yes 46% (6) - No	40% (6) - Yes 60 % (9) - No
Number of adult books at home	Mean - 10.6 (Range: 0-60) S.D. - 15.13	Mean - 40 (Range: 5-100) S.D. - 26.3

Table 18 indicates that:

- Half of the mothers claim to have books for adults in the home;
- There are individual differences among the mothers: The difference between the average number of books in PSA and PSB can be explained by the fact that one mother in PSB, an avid reader of the 'Mills & Boon' collection, has the whole set of books at home. Furthermore, some of the types of books mothers claim to have at home are: technical books (mentioned twice - one mother mentioned books on management and IT); the dictionary (mentioned once); books having to do with the family (mentioned three times and included books on pregnancy, babies, raising children, psychology); and story books;
- Mothers have English (n=2), French (n=2), English/French (n=5), and English/French/Oriental languages (n=7) books at home. The noticeable incidence of oriental language books (25% of the mothers interviewed) in the homes begged for an explanation. An explanation was provided by the next interview question, where mothers were asked to name a few of the books they have at home. The replies indicated books dealing with religion - mothers mentioned sacred books (the Quran, the Ramayan, the Bible) and

religious books (prayer books, books on religious practices like prayer saying). However, it was noted that of the 16 mothers who mentioned the presence of religious texts by naming them, 7 of them had actually claimed to have no books for adults at home in the earlier question. It was only when prompted⁶³ with the question, “Do you have books having to do with religion at home?” that they revealed the presence of holy and religious texts at home.

8.3.2.2 Parents’ reading habits

The data (**Appendix L.3**) reveal that:

- Newspaper reading is a fairly regular activity;
- The other reading activities tend to be functional (sales adverts) and educational (dictionary);
- 50% of interviewed mothers claim **never** to read for pleasure;
- 90% of the interviewed mothers claim **never** to read for work.

These findings confirm what Atchia-Emmerich (2005: 186) writes of Mauritians: “Les Mauriciens lisent très peu, sauf le journal quotidien.” [Mauritians in general read very little, except for the daily newspaper]. These data also tally with the SOFRES figures (**Appendix L.3, Table (16)**), and the MLA report (1996: 55) that shows that 85.4% of the parents buy newspapers (50% buy newspapers weekly, 24% buy them daily, 19.7% buy them sometimes, and 7.7% never buy newspapers).

These data indicate that for the mothers of PSA/PSB children, literacy is a set of skills to be cultivated at school for informative and educational purposes rather than as a source of entertainment, or an everyday practice.

⁶³ After the second interview, a mother mentioned having religious texts at home when asked to name some adult reading materials. This led me to prompt mothers with the question about the presence of religious texts when it came to the question of naming a few texts available in the home.

8.3.3 Parents' activities: Direct instruction

I describe the direct teaching of (1) oral English and (2) decoding skills, separately in this sub-section.

8.3.3.1 Oral English

The data (**Appendix L.4**), which quantify PSA/PSB parents' claims about the teaching of oral English, indicate that:

- Interviewed mothers engage in direct teaching with their 4 - and 5 - year olds;
- Most interviewed mothers teach mathematical concepts to their children in Kreol/French and English;
- 85% of the interviewed mothers engage in the direct teaching of general English words to their children, which can be characterised as **individual lexical items** that describe their immediate environments: there is only one mother who said that she used sentences, and of the two examples she gave during the interview, one is characterised by code-switching, with the sentence structure being in Kreol and the main lexical item being in English: "what is this? Ki to pe drink?" [*What is this? What are you drinking?*]. Mothers also expose their children to the **words they will be taught in Std1**: two mothers mentioned parts of the body and one mother mentioned the days of the week (both taught in the preschool);
- There is an absence of playful materials to teach oral English: 69% (PSA) and 53%(PSB) mothers claimed never to have bought word charts for their children; 62% (PSA) and 60% (PSA) mothers claimed never to have bought flashcards for their children. Apart from being related to the parents' lack of knowledge about the possible use of visual aids as a route to learning English, it must be acknowledged that the parents involved in this research are lower middle-class families for whom the financial factor might play a significant role in determining what they buy.

8.3.3.2 Decoding skills

With respect to decoding skills (**Appendix L.4**), the claims made by mothers are as follows:

- All interviewed mothers teach the alphabet to their children;
- 33% of the interviewed mothers teach their children to read and write words in English and French;
- The mothers, who mentioned teaching their children to read and write in English and French, mentioned the word “recopier”, that is, copy down again what the parents themselves had written down.

An earlier question about whether parents bought ready-made workbooks for their children reveals that some 50% of the interviewed parents tend to buy them. In PSA: 46% said they never bought them, 46% said they sometimes did and 8% said they often did. In PSB: 47% said they never bought them, 33% said they sometimes did and 20% claimed they often did so. The ready-made workbooks produced locally or in India (they are cheaper than European books) and available locally are alphabet books and wordbooks. The alphabet books typically contain an alphabet page and dotted lines for children to trace on them. The word books typically contain a drawing and the related word for children to trace the words on the dotted lines.

8.3.4 Parents' activities: Indirect instruction

The literature review pointed toward storybook reading as the main activity (Ch3.7.1), where children are indirectly exposed to oral and decoding skills.

8.3.4.1 Books for children

Table 19: Children's books in the home

	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
Children's books at home	100% (13) - Yes	87 % (13) – Yes 13% (2) - No
Number of children's books at home	Mean - 12.7 (Range: 2-40) S.D. - 10	Mean - 20 (Range: 2 –100) S.D. - 28.1

Note: One of the families has as many as a hundred books; this explains the disparity in the standard deviation between the two groups.

Although most families have children's books at home, the average number ranges between 12.7 and 20, with large individual differences. The different types of children's books, which interviewed mothers claimed to have, are picture books, story books, school books, alphabet books, colouring books, and an encyclopaedia (**Appendix L.5**).

8.3.4.2 Parents' reading practices with their children

Table 20: How often do you/a family member tell a story to your child in a typical week?

	PSA (n=13)			PSB (n=15)		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
YOU: at bedtime	54% (7)	31% (4)	15% (2)	53% (8)	20% (3)	27% (4)
YOU: at other times	69% (9)	23% (3)	8% (1)	67% (10)	13% (2)	20% (3)
Family member: at bedtime	38% (5)	54% (7)	8% (1)	53% (8)	47% (7)	0
Family member: at other times	77% (10)	23% (3)	0	53% (8)	47% (7)	0

The information in Table 20, which indicates limited storybook reading for children, should be taken in conjunction with the information gathered from three other sets of findings:

- 1) The number of books in the home (Tables 18 and 19);
- 2) Mothers (77% in PSA, 53% in PSB) sometimes buy books for their children: In PSA, 15% mothers said that they never bought books for her child, 77% said they sometimes did so and 8 % claimed to often do so. In PSB, 20% said they never did, 53% said they sometimes did and 27% said they often did;
- 3) Most children (85% in PSA, 93% in PSB) do not subscribe to a library: The reasons given by the mothers are that the children were not yet at primary school and that they were too young. The MLA report (1996: 59) found that one out of two Std4 subjects (4 out of 10 in urban, 1 out of 2 in rural areas) do not use the library facilities in Mauritius.

Taken together, the data indicate that:

- Few PSA/PSB children had regular or daily exposure to storybook reading in the home;
- For the mothers who mentioned reading to their children, they described their reading sessions in terms of reading the book in French or English and then translating into Kreol for their children;
- Siblings were usually the other family members reading to preschoolers.

8.3.5 Parents' beliefs and expectations

With respect to the teaching of oral English skills, decoding skills and storybook reading, PSA/PSB mothers were asked questions, which revealed their beliefs about and their expectations of preschool education (**Appendix L.6**).

8.3.5.1 The younger the better

The data reveal that PSA/PSB mothers believe in the benefits of an early start: the vast majority of mothers disagreed with the statement that preschoolers are too young to be exposed to languages other than their mother tongue. Although the research to date is still inconclusive about the effects of age on language learning (Hakuta, 2001; Singleton, 2005), the myth of 'the younger, the better' forms part of the Mauritian psyche. Like in Hong Kong, Mauritian parents seem to regard the preschool as an extension of primary school (Rao *et al.*, 2003).

8.3.5.2 Oral English

The data reveal that:

- Most mothers (92% in PSA, 80% in PSB) are conscious that their children actually do English at the preschool, because they hear their children sing English songs, say English words and more rarely, hear their children say sentences in English. On being asked to give an example of a sentence that their children say in English, the response was 'What is your name?', a formulaic phrase which I observed was taught to the children in both preschools;

- All interviewed mothers expect preschool teachers to teach their children words in English, colours, numbers, shapes in English as well as to sing in English;
- All interviewed mothers expect the teachers to engage in activities both in Kreol/French and in English, revealing that parents value the introduction of English at preschool level;
- All interviewed mothers believe that children should be introduced to English at pre-primary level, with a majority believing that this will help the transition to Std1. Asked a specific question on their opinion about whether they thought English would help their children integrate the primary school, parents said that (1) English is the language used to teach Maths and EVS as early as Std1, (2) English is the very foundation upon which is built the Mauritian educational system, (3) English facilitates adaptation, reading and the understanding of the other subjects, and (4) English language and literacy are the routes to syllabus content. This confirms the findings that most parents agree with the statement that English would facilitate their transition to the primary education system. The only mothers who did not agree with the statement said that they were unsure (rather than disagreed with it).

To a related open-ended question, where parents were asked why they wanted their children to be taught English at pre-primary level, a plethora of reasons were mentioned. Inductive analysis, used to categorise the reasons, reveals that parents conceive English as the language of educational and professional success, the language of books and cartoons, and the language of the Std1 syllabus. For parents, English is also the international language that is more easily learnt when children are young. I must here acknowledge that there were a few mothers, who said that they liked the language and that they wanted their children to go abroad. These reasons indicate that the interviewed mothers tend to have instrumental, rather than integrative, motivations (Lamb, 2004) for their children's learning of English.

The above data can be read against the data on Kreol in preschools, where:

- 75% of the interviewed mothers expressed themselves against the introduction of Kreol as a MoI: because (1) it is spoken in the home, (2) it will lead to confusion, (3) Maths and EVS should be taught in English, and (4) English is the key to educational and professional mobility and success;
- 18% of the interviewed mothers (one mother in PSA, 4 mothers in PSB) were for Kreol as MoI and one mother in PSA said she was unsure: these mothers said their children should know how to read and write their mother tongue and that it might make their educational task easier;
- All interviewed mothers were against the **exclusive** use of Kreol as a medium of communication between teacher and pupil in the preschool.

8.3.5.3 Decoding skills

The data suggest that interviewed mothers value the traditional approach to teaching literacy:

- Except for 2 mothers in PSA, all mothers interviewed thought that preschool teachers should teach the alphabet to their progeny;
- Most mothers (100% in PSA, 80% in PSB) believed that the teachers should use ready-made workbooks in the preschool;
- Mothers were less ambitious about the teaching of reading and writing English and French words: approximately 25% mothers said they thought their children were too young to be taught to read, write and recognise words in their last year of preschool. However, mothers were more demanding with the school than with themselves, expecting the teachers to teach their children to recognise, read and write words in French and English. While two-thirds parents claimed not to engage in the activity at home, 75% expected the school to do so.

8.3.5.4 Storybook reading

With respect to storybook reading,

- 90% mothers said that storybook reading should form part of the preschool syllabus and that their children should be read to an average of 2 (PSB) to 3 (PSA) times a week;
- Mothers tend to view reading as a relaxing activity (**Appendix L.5, Table (20)**): Apart from one mother (PSB) who saw reading as a means to develop the love of reading, and two mothers who expressed their view that reading had moral ramifications, most mothers perceived reading as a game, dissociated from more skills-based formal-type of work, which they seem to think their children should be doing at the preschool.

The above data reveal that there is a rising consciousness about the importance of reading among parents. This was also found in a case study of Std5 students' reading practices in PSA and PSB, where students demonstrated consciousness about the importance of book reading, fuelled by primary school teachers who encouraged them to read at home (Auleear Owodally, 2005) and by national activities. One such activity is the annual Book Day where different bookshops unite to sell books at reduced prices. This activity is given an important place in media coverage. However, PSA/PSB mothers did not seem to be conscious of the multiple benefits of storybook reading.

8.4 Discussion

8.4.1 The status of English in relation to the other languages

The data here presented show that although English has no place as a social language in Mauritian homes and families, it is perceived as an important school language that ensures progress since it predominates in the educational sector. This has an impact on parents' perception of English as an important language as early as the preschool sector. Hence, parents see the teaching of English at preschool level as an early investment in what will become a passport to educational and professional development and success, and ultimately to social mobility.

While there is little evidence that English is infiltrating informal domains, the data in this chapter indicate that Kreol seems to be slowly infiltrating more formal domains. For instance, most mothers speak Kreol with the preschool teachers. The data thus question the simplistic, static and dichotomic *diglossia* model which views the high language as the language of formal domains and the low language, that of informal domains. Tirvassen (p.c.) points out that *diglossia* might be an interesting concept to describe a sociolinguistic phenomenon at the macro level. He, however, questions the ability of the concept to describe linguistic realities at micro level, as for instance, in the classroom. Despite the incursion of Kreol in some formal domains, the data reveal interviewed mothers' reluctance to have Kreol as MoI. I must acknowledge that the small-scale data here presented are not necessarily representative of the beliefs of the whole population. However, they replicate Rajah-Carrim's (2007: 61) findings, but are at odds with press reports that parents are in favour of a change in language policy. Such findings suggest the need for more extended research into parents' views and beliefs before there is any radical change in language policy.

As for French, it seems to be the mothers' claimed or desired medium of communication with their children. Of course, the quality of the French (in terms of pronunciation, grammaticality, genre, style) used by these mothers is outside the scope of this research; nonetheless, the data reveal that mothers believe that they are using French and Kreol with their progeny. This belief can be understood in the local social and linguistic context: on the one hand, French is the language of the social prestige, and on the other hand, French is linguistically more similar to Kreol than English is, thus making it easier for mothers to use French (or to think they are using French). In view of the research carried out on the effects of gender on language choice (Coates, 1993; Litosseliti, 2006), the fact that it is mothers who were interviewed, rather than fathers, could partly explain why there is this tendency to claim to be using French with the children. Moreover, half of interviewed mothers were uncertain, or did not think, that children in English medium schools had an advantage over their own children. They said that English and French are both important in Mauritius, and that not studying French is disadvantageous for social

integration. This reflects on their positive attitudes to French as a prestigious social language.

When read against each other, mothers' comments indicate that they value Kreol as language of the home, French as the language of socialisation and English as the language of education and professional development and mobility.

8.4.2 The reading culture

The data presented in this chapter provide us with a glimpse of the literacy culture in which PSA/PSB children are brought up and socialised. Although I do not want to take a 'deficiency model' approach, it seems appropriate to compare the Mauritian data with data available in the international literature. This literature indicates that an average American family owns about 137 books (Purves & Elley, 1994, cited in Krashen, 2003a) and an average Hispanic family, with limited English proficiency, owns about 26 books (Ramirez *et al.*, 1991, cited in Krashen, 2003a). Taking adult and children books together, the data here presented place our Mauritian subjects somewhere in the middle. Mauritius is thus unlike the South African context, where many children have little if any exposure to the written form of any language, where many parents do not read or write at home, and where children have few opportunities to see people reading and writing as they go about their daily lives (Bloch, 2000b: 192). However, the data do present some particularities that I discuss below.

8.4.2.1 What counts as a book

I would argue that interviewed mothers conceive books as being a school-type book (a book which is informative or didactic in nature) and as being books in European languages. When asked about the books for adults in the homes, interviewed mothers tended to mention specialised and informative books, which tend to be in European languages in Mauritius. Conversely, mothers tended not to mention religious books until prompted. Many of the religious books available locally are written in OL and Kreol.

For instance, I have also noted that some of the religious books given in the *madrassahs*⁶⁴ are written in Kreol. Moreover, when asked to give examples of their children's books, apart from storybooks and colouring books, all the other books that they mentioned were related to education. Finally, interviewed mothers did not mention the presence of Kreol books in the home.

The neo-colonial mind set in which interviewed mothers tend to be, can be explained by the fact that (1) parents come from non- or semi-literate families, (2) they have acquired literacy in European languages through formal education, and (3) they value the European languages as the passport to educational success. Read against the sociolinguistic and educational background described in Ch2.4, and drawing on the literature on NLS (Ch3.8), one can say that as Mauritian mothers are immersed in Discourse (to use Gee's distinction), which emphasises dominant literacies, they are socialised into certain Eurocentric attitudes, beliefs and values without being aware of it (Rogers, 2002).

8.4.2.2 Religious literacies

I here use Herbert & Robinson's (2001) term to describe the literacy practices related to religion in the local context. The data (Ch8.3.2) reveal the religious aspect of the literacy culture of Hindu and Muslim families in PSA/PSB: books, written in a number of OL, have an important place in the homes of our subjects because they are associated with religion. PSA/PSB parents claim to possess both sacred texts and religious texts at home. Their comments indicate that all **muslim** families possess a Quran (Classical Arabic). In these families, prayers are learnt by heart and recited in Classical Arabic and children go to *madrassahs*, where they are taught to read and write Arabic and Urdu, as well as to rote learn and recite a number of Arabic prayers (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). As for **hindus** families, not all families possess the sacred texts (non-vegetarians may not possess the texts); those who possess them have translated versions (Sanskrit and Hindi/English) and these are kept away in the special prayer room. Believers will usually

⁶⁴ *Madrassahs* are Koranic schools, attached to each mosque. As soon as they turn 4, many Muslim children attend *Madrassahs* in the afternoons after school hours.

recite prayers in Sanskrit as an everyday home practice. Children, attending the *baitkas*,⁶⁵ are taught Hindi as well as *mantras* in Sanskrit.

A paradoxical situation arises since, although reading and reciting from sacred texts are part of PSA/PSB family religious practices, it seems unlikely that parents or children actually understand the sacred texts mentioned above. Such home literacy practices have a religious and symbolical function rather than a communicative and informative purpose: the language(s) in which the sacred, religious books and prayers are made makes me think that the reading, reciting and rote prayer learning take place with little, if any, understanding. This brings us back to the ritualistic English prayer-saying sessions in the schools (Ch6.3.2), which have the same kind of symbolism. Moreover, the religious books carry with them associated respect and aura (for instance, one cannot touch a Quran without ablution, and sacred Hindu texts are kept away in prayer rooms) because of what they represent, rather than what they contain - few people actually understand the meaning of the texts although they have utmost respect for books.

The Indian historical, religious and cultural heritage of part of the Mauritian population might differentiate Mauritius from some other African contexts. When Indian indentured labourers came to Mauritius in 1835, they brought their written sacred texts with them. Furthermore, before many Indo-Mauritian children went to school for a secular education, they went to *madrassahs* and *baitkas* for religious education (Edun, 2006; Jahangeer-Chojoo, 2004; Ramdoyal, 1977) and many Indo-Mauritian children still attend *madrassahs* and *baitkas* after school hours.

8.4.2.3 Reading practices

With respect to reading, the data indicate that apart from weekly newspapers, interviewed mothers do not do much personal reading. Furthermore, interviewed mothers engage in limited storybook reading with their progeny, yet they expect preschool teachers to read

⁶⁵ *Baitkas* are Hindu religious schools. Although they seem less widespread than the *madrassahs*, some Hindu children do attend them. *Mantras* are prayers that are recited.

between two and three times a week, which is paradoxical when one considers their own reading to their children.

On the one hand, PSA/PSB children are not provided with adult-reading role models in their homes; on the other hand, they have rare exposure to storybook reading in the home. It seems that in the context of the collected data, the 'poverty of reading culture' can be explained by linguistic and cultural factors. As far that the **linguistic factor** is concerned, bearing in mind the interviewed mothers' level of education, I would argue that mothers' language proficiency might act as a barrier to regular reading. As for their reading to their children, it was noted that for those parents who mentioned reading to their children, they described their reading sessions in terms of reading the book in French or English and then translating into Kreol for their children. This appears to be a time- and energy-consuming task for the parents as it is a time-consuming and concentration-requiring task for the children. It is thus possible that the language element is acting as an intervening factor in parents' (own and with their children's) reading practices (Ch7.4.4).

There is also the **cultural factor** that might impact on parents' reading practices. The children's family background indicated that 50% mothers are housewives, some of whom have small children. Furthermore, a number of women in Mauritius have extended-family responsibilities, where the daughter-in-law is expected to contribute to the housework. It seems to me that the local life style might also contribute to the absence of time-consuming storybook reading. A similar kind of trend has been observed in South Africa, and Bloch (2002b: 70) says that not many parents read and write because they work long hours, use public transport and do not have ready access to libraries.

The linguistic and cultural factors, which hinder PSA/PSB mothers' own reading practices, might explain why mothers expect the school to read to their children: they expect the school to fill in for what they do not, or cannot do at home.

8.4.3 Preference for a skills-based approach to literacy instruction

Compared with the tendencies noted in Europe and America, where the emphasis has been on teaching children through play, interviewed mothers use, favour and value a skills-based approach to literacy instruction for their preschool-aged children (Ch8.3.3). One of the reasons mentioned in the literature for this parental preference is **parental background**. Stipek and Byler (1997) suggest that parents with low-incomes and relatively poor education are more likely to endorse highly structured, basic-skills oriented programmes for young children and to see basic skills as essential for school readiness. The parents involved in this research are indeed lower middle class families with fairly limited educational background. Their practices can also be explained by their own preschool and primary school experience, where a skills-based approach to literacy instruction was used.

Another reason mentioned in the literature is **pressures from the next educational level**. Foot *et al.* (2000, cited in O’Gorman *et al.*, 2004) have argued that as children move closer to school entry age, there is a tendency for parents to place strong emphasis on education rather than play. The parents’ reference to storybook reading as a playful activity to be performed as a relaxing activity after more serious work, indicates that parents indeed view the need for the final preschool year to be a more serious year. Furthermore, they have clearly articulated their belief that their children needed to be prepared for Std1.

Analysing parental practices against parental beliefs, it appears that the parents’ literacy beliefs impact on their literacy practices (Lynch *et al.*, 2006).

8.4.4 Role of older siblings

Although less is known about the role of siblings (Williams, 2004: 52), Gregory (2001) does talk about the reciprocity between older and younger siblings, suggesting that literacy events are co-constructed by multiple participants. It is possible that sisters and brothers, who play and work together, assume the important role of literacy teachers to their younger siblings (Azmitia & Hesser, 1993, cited in Sonnenschein & Munsterman,

2002: 323; Gregory & Williams, 2000; Lenhart & Roskos, 2003: 96; Volk & De Acosta, 2004). Volk & De Acosta (2004: 38) writes a critique of the available empirical data collected from mainstream American families, as they argue that these families might contain siblings who are less skilful teachers than siblings in other diverse cultures. Interviewed mothers often mentioned that if some other member of the family read to the preschoolers, it was usually older siblings rather than the other parent. Some mothers in PSA and PSB also mentioned that older siblings taught their younger brothers and sisters English words, which they themselves learnt at school. Given that Mauritian education system thrives on homework, it can be expected that older siblings have English homework to do in the afternoon. Once muslim children reach Std4, they tend to stop attending afternoon *madrassah* because of the pressures of private tuition and homework. It thus seems that in Mauritius, older siblings might assume the role of knowledgeable others and they transfer their **school knowledge** to their younger brothers and sisters.

The above interpretation can be supported by the 2003 SACMEQ report, which reveals that on average, Std6 pupils have 37.6 books at home (since the questionnaire does not differentiate among types of books, it is possible that pupils are not differentiating between a school book, a storybook and a dictionary, all of which are books) and that 91 % of the pupils are in schools having a school library. It also seems that primary school teachers encourage their students to read at home (Auleear Owodally, 2005) and many of the mothers involved in this research have older children who are in upper primary school. This suggests that older siblings might be schooling their younger brothers and sisters into literacy in particular ways in the local context.

8.5 Summary of findings

What comes out of this analysis of PSA/PSB parent interviews is summarised below:

- **SRQ(vi):** Children grow up in Kreol-speaking environments, where French has prestige as a social language, but where there is a near absence of English;
- **SRQ(vii):** Parents favour the direct teaching of discrete lexical items in English, especially the words that are taught in the preschool and in Std1;

- **SRQ(viii):** Parents tend to engage their children in school-type activities, characterised by direct teaching and a skills-based approach to early literacy instruction;
- **SRQ(viii):** The home environment is not totally devoid of literate materials and activities: the literate activities that adults engage in tend to be for informative and/or religious purposes, rarely for entertainment and pleasure;
- **SRQ(viii):** They rarely practice storybook reading, and this can be explained by cultural and linguistic factors;
- **SRQ(ix):** Parents value the importance of English in the preschool;
- **SRQ(ix):** They expect the school to teach oral English and decoding skills to their children, they also expect the school to do what they cannot at home, for instance, book reading and workbook exercises.

Older siblings might play the role of the knowledgeable other, transmitting school literacy practices to their younger brothers and sisters.

CHAPTER 9

The intervention programme, test design and test results

9.1 Introduction

Phase 3 of this study brings in a comparative approach in the research design of this thesis, so as to help me focus on **SRQ(x-xii)**:

SRQ (x): How much English do preschoolers learn in their final preschool year? (PSA and PSB)

SRQ (xi): How familiar are they with pre-reading/writing conventions? (PSA and PSB)

SRQ (xii): What would be the learning outcomes if an alternative approach to teaching oral English were used in the preschool (PSB)?

In order to address **SRQ(x-xii)**,

- I briefly describe the actual contents of the Oral English Intervention Programme (OEIP) as it was implemented in PSB;
- I explain the design of the **test**, used in this thesis;
- I describe the administration of the test to PSA/PSB children, so as to assess their EL development over their final preschool year;
- I present, analyse and discuss, using a comparative approach, the test results of the two groups of children involved in this research.

9.2 The Oral English Intervention Programme (OEIP)

The rationale, theoretical underpinnings, aims and objectives, subjects, intended contents and limitations of the OEIP are described in Ch4.5. I will here only briefly report on the actual timeline and contents of the OEIP, run throughout 2005, as a quasi-experimental design in PSB (a preschool similar to PSA).

9.2.1 Timeline

Table 21: Activities in PSB over 2005

Date	Events
27 January 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning of OEIP in PSB with a group of 15 children
10 February 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After 10 sessions with the group of 15 children, PSB teachers advised me to split the group into two. This was largely due to my inexperience with such young children, their usual general enthusiasm on seeing me (especially knowing that I would take them out in the garden or to the library 'to play'), leading to lack of attention and to indiscipline; and the nature of the materials being utilised (flash cards, books)
11 February 2005 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I separated the children into two groups (7 - 8 children in each group) and worked with each group on alternate days, in 15 - 20 minute sessions
Over the year: 27 January – 30 September 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had exactly 65 sessions with each group of children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Term 1 – 26 sessions Term 2 – 26 sessions Term 3 – 13 sessions

A logbook was kept to record all the activities done during the year; this logbook was also used to write down my comments on the OEIP and on the behaviour and response of the children involved in the programme. The logbook is available for consultation. The mean number of days during which PSB children were present at school was 133.6 (on 144 school days), compared to 135.4 days (on 148 school days) for PSA children.

9.2.2 Contents

The OEIP was designed to be as far as possible in line with the spirit of the 2003PPG (Ch5.3.2), and in line with the literature on the role of oral proficiency and language comprehension as a support for optimal FL reading development (Ch3.5.2). The contents of the OEIP, as they were used throughout 2005, are described in **Appendix U**. Although I initially tried to keep pace with the theme being taught by PSB teachers each week, I soon realised that this seriously limited what I could teach to the children and how often I could do so. In that specific context, I revised my initial plan to deal only with the theme being taught weekly. Instead I used the thematic approach to come up with a list of

words to be taught to the children for each theme, but then introduced the children to different words and structures depending on the song, story, flashcard, picture book being used, as well as the children's disposition to be receptive to and learn what was being taught. At the level of its implementation, thus, the OEIP revealed that keeping strictly to the thematic approach was extremely problematic because it did not ensure regular and repeated exposure to English. The OEIP experiment suggested that the thematic approach might need to be reconsidered if any English language learning by students was to be expected as they finished their final year at preschool.

The OEIP also revealed the extent to which storybook reading was a language challenge for the learners and for myself. Since all the English books available in the classroom library were beyond the children's level, I found myself having to take pictures of my daughter and write stories represented by the photos in a language suitable for the children's level (**Picture Library, PSB**). Coincidentally, by the end of the **first term**, the children requested a story to be read to them at almost each session. This behaviour is reported as typical for monolinguals (Arnold & Colburn, 2005; Smith, 1985).



Photo 10: Using flash cards



Photo 11: Storybook reading



Photo 12: TPR activities



Photo 13: Using balls to teach colours

9.3 Test design

9.3.1 The test: chosen means to assess the children

One of the ways of evaluating the curriculum, its implementation and its outcomes is to evaluate the children's EL performance and progress over their final year at preschool. However, because of the non-compulsory status of pre-primary education in Mauritius, no formal assessment is carried out with preschool children as they exit preschool to enter primary school. Thus, there is no assessment-kit available locally to appraise preschool children's EL proficiency.

Tests have been critiqued for their limited view of language and literacy development, for their disenfranchising of teachers and for their constraining instructional possibilities (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 1995: 6; Johnston & Costello, 2005). Alternative forms of assessment for young children such as informal observations, portfolios, performance-based assessment, rubrics have been described in the literature on preschool education (refer to Peregoy & Boyle, 2005: 388-401; Soderman *et al.*, 1999; Wortham, 2001). Nevertheless, the test was chosen as the main means of assessing the children's oral English and literacy proficiency because it seemed, to me, to be the most reliable mode of assessment in such an ethnographic case study, which has a quasi-experimental design interwoven within its structure. A battery of two tests was used:

- **Test 1** was adapted from an already existing tests;
- **Test 2** was designed specifically for the purposes of this thesis.

9.3.2 Theoretical backup for Test 1

Test 1 is an adaptation of existing tests found in the literature, as described in detail in Ch9.3.3. **Test 1** was drawn up the light of:

- My understanding of EL (Ch3.4) as applicable to the local context:

Print/Decoding Skills

- Print knowledge
 - concepts of print
 - attitudes to print
- Familiarity with the alphabet

- Cummins' (1979b) argument that decoding skills are transferable across languages,
- The fact that languages with similar writing systems enhances the possibility of the transfer of decoding skills: Bialystok *et al.*'s (2005) review of a number of empirical studies (Geva & Siegel, 2000; Gholamin & Geva, 1999; Wade-Woolley & Geva, 2000) and their own research suggest that, "two languages written in an alphabetic system should be more amenable to skill transfer than would be an alphabetic and a character language" (pg. 581).⁶⁶ In Mauritius, English and French are the LoL and they both share the use of the Roman alphabet.

However, I have adapted the test to Mauritian context by using local materials, logos, and photos available in the children's own environment to test the children's sensitivity to the print. I also administered **Test 1** entirely in Kreol. Since all the tested children are native speakers of Kreol, the test subjects were given the Kreol translation of the test, with all questions being posed in Kreol.

⁶⁶ I am aware of, and here acknowledge, the new research area in child psychology, which focuses on the skills (phonological and decoding) underlying languages using different scripts among bilingual children – Chinese/Korean and English in Hong Kong: Bialystok *et al.* (2005), Chan & McBride-Chang (2005), Cho & McBride-Chang (2005), McBride-Chang *et al.* (2004), McBride-Chang & Ho (2005), McBride-Chang & Kail (2002), McBride-Chang *et al.* (2006), McBride-Chang & Treiman (2003) and Wing-Yin Chow *et al.* (2005). I would like to thank Professor McBride-Chang for having sent me a collection of her articles by post.

9.3.3 Detailed description of Test 1

Test 1 is described in Table 22, and discussed below. A copy of **Test 1** is found in **Appendix V.1**.

Table 22: Brief description of Test 1

	Task	Description	Max. Marks
PRINT KNOWLEDGE			
Part 1: Concepts of Print	1A	Storybook Orientation	6
	1B	Directionality	9
	1C	Context-dependent word recognition.	16
		Total Marks for PART 1	31
Part 2: Attitude to print related activities	1D (I-iv)	Interest measure (Pictures)	4
	1D (v-viii)	Interest measure (Objects)	4
		Total Marks for PART 2	8
FAMILIARITY WITH THE ALPHABET			
Part 3: Letter Naming and Name- Writing	1E	Letter naming 1	10
	1F	Letter naming 2	10
	1G	Name writing	5
	1H	Letter writing	6
		Total Marks for PART 3	31
	Total Marks for PARTS 1, 2 AND 3		70

9.3.3.1 Part 1: Concepts of Print

Storybook Orientation. Sulzby (1985) and Clay (1975) (cited in Hiebert & Adams, 1987: 28) have described the role of children's orientation to storybooks in emergent literacy. Task 1A is an adaptation of the *Sand Test* (1972, adapted by Hiebert, 1981; Hiebert & Adams, 1987; Mason, 1980; Smythe *et al.*, 1971), which aims to assess children's familiarity with the book and their awareness of reading behaviours. In this

test, the children are shown three stimuli in random order: a picture book (book containing only pictures), a storybook (a book containing pictures and text), and a textbook (a book containing only text). The children are asked whether they think that an adult can read the book. If they say “yes,” then they are asked to identify what the adult reads on the page. Each correct answer receives one mark, the total marks for this task being 6.

Directionality. Clay (1993, cited in Levy *et al.*, 2006) emphasises that printing conventions (direction rules, spatial formatting, punctuation) and visual patterns (word and letter clusters) impact on reading development. Although fluent readers automatically process printing conventions and visual patterns, emergent readers may find them to be a source of confusion. In Task 1B, the children are asked to pick up a book as if they are about to read it, indicate the front and back of the book, show the top of a page, point to a picture, word, letter, turn the pages as if they are reading the book, and show the direction in which an adult reads a line from the book. Each correct answer is allotted 1 mark, totalling 9 marks.

Context-dependent word recognition. Mason (1980, cited in Hiebert and Adams, 1987: 28) suggests that the recognition of environmental print represents a first stage in word-recognition. Task 1C contains 16 commonly occurring words, presented in their environmental context. The children are asked to identify the logos. Each correct answer is given 1 mark, to make up a total of 16 marks. For reasons, which are detailed below (Ch9.5.1), a re-worked Task 1C (Task 1C(ii)) was used in the post-test, where the children were shown 14 logos taken out of their print context (refer to **Photo Library: Sample Task 1C(i) and Task 1C(ii)**).

9.3.3.2 Part 2: Interest in print related activities

Interest measure. The children’s interest in reading and writing activities is delved into through Task 1D. For Task 1D (i-iv), the children are presented with four sets, each containing two pictures: one of the two pictures presents a print-related activity (reading a book, looking at a big book, playing with flash cards, writing on a piece of paper) and

the other picture presents a non-print indoor activity (playing with a car, a puzzle, building blocks and colourful shapes) - refer to **Photo Library: Sample Task 1D**. For Task ID (v-viii), the children are presented with four sets of objects, each containing two types of objects, one being print-related (book, pencil & rubber, paper and crayons, copybook) and the other not (dough, toy animals, toy cellular phone, puzzle). In each of the two tasks, the children are asked to choose one picture or object that they prefer. If they say “both”, they are again asked to choose one. Each time the child shows interest for a print related activity, s/he is given a mark, the maximum marks for this task being 8.

9.3.3.3 Part 3: Letter naming/writing & name-writing

Letter naming. Two measures are used to evaluate alphabet knowledge, an essential element in literacy development (Ehri, 1983; Worden & Boetcher, 1990, cited in Bloodgood, 1999: 351). In Task 1E, the children are asked to recite the first 10 letters of the alphabet. In Task 1F, the lower and upper case of 10 letters (A, C, F, H, K, L, R, S, V, T) are written on two sides of a piece of cardboard, and the letters are presented to them in random order. Although Smythe *et al.* (1971) argue that uppercase letters are learnt earlier than lowercase letters, the lowercase letters were first shown to the children because it was observed that lowercase letters are usually used in Mauritian preschool settings. If the children fail to recognise the lowercase letter, they are then shown the uppercase version. The children are given 1 mark for each correct answer.

Letter writing. It has been suggested (Ferreiro, 1978, cited in Hiebert & Adams, 1987: 29) that the production of writing is a dimension of EL. In Task 1H, the children are asked to write 6 letters (E, B, J, P, U, Z). Each correct answer is allotted 1 mark.

Name writing. As youngsters begin to explore written language, their name becomes a natural focus. Researchers (Bloodgood, 1999: 342; Clay, 1975, cited in Hiebert & Adams, 1987: 28; Kirk & Clark, 2005) suggest that the name is an important first step towards literacy: it indicates children’s level of motor and graphic control, their literacy sophistication and cognitive development. The children are thus asked to write their names in Task 1G. The marking scheme is as follows:

- No response: 0 marks
- Pictures and scribbles: 1 mark
- Conventional letters: 2 marks
- Less than 50% correctly written: 3 marks
- More than 50% correctly written: 4 marks
- Well written: 5 marks.

9.3.4 Theoretical backup for Test 2

Given the importance of oral proficiency in EL development (Ch3.5) and in view of the use of English as main LoL and the MoI in Std1 in Mauritius, the children's oral proficiency in English had to be tested. No English test being available in the local context, a search was made in the literature for tests dealing with children learning English as SL/FL. A number are described in Soderman *et al.* (1999: 182-185) and Wortham (2001: 265-269), for instance, the *Brigrance Diagnostic Inventory of Basic Skills* (1982), the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised* (Dunn & Dunn, 1981), and the *Bilingual Syntax Measure* (1976). Although these standardised tests offer the advantage of uniformity in test administration, quantification scores, norm referencing, validity and reliability, their major shortcoming is their restricted relevance to the Mauritian language and educational context. These tests, designed in developed countries (UK, United States), are aimed mainly at children of immigrants who come to live in an SL learning situation and who have to enter mainstream education (which is in English for native speakers of English, as well as for SL learners who do not go to specially designed bilingual programmes).

Having decided that the tests described in the Euro-American literature might contain a bias, I searched the literature written on African countries, whose language situations are more similar to the Mauritian situation. However, few African countries are presently offering pre-primary to their children (Ch2.2). The only test that was found is the one referred to and described in Taiwo & Tyolob (2002). This test proved to be extremely basic, and showed minimal evidence of theoretical grounding, reliability or validity. The South African RNCS (2002) includes a Reception programme for English as a first

additional language. This programme says that children should understand short stories, simple oral instructions, respond to greetings, memorise and perform songs and rhymes. However, the RNCS does not propose guidelines for a language assessment. In any case, it would be unfair to use those guidelines to prepare a language test for Mauritian preschoolers.

In such a context, the best option was the designing, through an adaptation of the above-mentioned tests, of a test that would be more appropriate to the Mauritian context. Although this proved to be a challenge, this step is in line with the current postcolonial research scene that has considered problematical the research tools provided by developed countries to carry out research in developing countries.

Test 2 was designed as a summative criterion-referenced test, of the pre-test/post-test design. I had to address a number of theoretical and practical questions as I was designing the test. They are dealt with separately and in some detail, in my endeavour to address validity and reliability issues.

A major question arising at the beginning of the test design was the definition of 'English proficiency', which would determine the form and content of the test. According to Spolsky (1989), one cannot develop sound language tests without a method of defining what it means to know a language. As discussed in Ch2.4.4, there is no official document that articulates the learning outcomes for English at preschool level. The first hurdle was thus to come at a definition of 'oral English proficiency.' To do so, I bore in mind the theoretical review on 'language proficiency' (Ch3.5.3) and the research on child foreign language teaching, which talks of a 'silent period' for language learners (Ch3.6.1). I also took into account the specific Mauritian context, where (1) English is not a social language, but a language learnt at school, (2) preschoolers tend to be exposed to individual words (as revealed in the pilot study - Ch1.6 - and confirmed by the data collected for this thesis - Ch6) and not grammar and conversation, and (3) preschoolers are not meant to start learning to read and write at preschool level. My conceptualisation

of ‘oral proficiency’ *in situ* thus included oral comprehension skills (not productive skills or written skills) and word meaning (not sentence meaning), in the test design.

9.3.5 Contents of Test 2

Several measures had to be taken to ensure a reasonably valid and reliable test (Hughes, 2003; Shohamy, 2000).

9.3.5.1 Test validity

Test validity is concerned with the relationship between what the test aims to measure and what it actually measures:

- **Construct validity:** Diligent use was made of the conceptualisation of the oral proficiency, and its meaning *in situ*;
- **Content validity:** Information on oral English learning at preschool level was gathered from various relevant sources:
 - The guidelines found in the 2003PPG,
 - The information found in the TTM,
 - The data obtained from preliminary observations from the pilot study, and
 - PSA and PSB teachers’ daily plans for 2004: since at the beginning of the research, I had little idea of the kind or level of English preschool teachers expose children to, I asked PSA and PSB teachers to make available to me their daily plans for the year 2004, the year preceding my longitudinal study. Working from these daily plans, I was able to create a set of themes, words, songs and simple commands in English that PSA and PSB teachers usually expose children to in the preschool.

Using the above information, I compiled a list of words using http://www.eslkidstuff.com/flashcard_list.htm. In November 2004, two teachers, one from PSA and one from PSB, were asked to erase all the words they had never exposed the children to in class in 2004. This exercise helped me determine which words PSA and PSB teachers were most likely to expose preschoolers to in 2005. From the list of

remaining words, a random selection was made to design the test consisting of two main parts:

- **Test 2, Part 1:** Receptive vocabulary: general concepts (two levels of difficulty were assigned);
- **Test 2, Part 2:** Receptive vocabulary: mathematical concepts.

Pilot 1 - Test 2

The test being largely picture-based, my first concern was the question of whether the children would actually recognise the hand-made drawings.⁶⁷ **Test 2** was thus first piloted on five children to ensure that they would correctly interpret the pictures. This pilot testing led to a few changes being made in the choice of pictures, the order of pictures as well as items to be tested. For instance, the presence of *ears/eye, duck/dog* in the same part of the **Pilot 1 - Test 2** appeared to be a problem for the children because of their phonetic similarity. I thus decided to include only one of the terms in the pair so as not to confuse the children.

Peer Review

Test 2 was then submitted for peer review to Associate Professor R. Tirvassen (2005, p.c.) and Mrs Joseph (2005, p.c.). They were chosen because they complement each other in their assessment of the test, the former being an academic and the latter, a practitioner. **Associate Professor R. Tirvassen** works at the Mauritius Institute of Education. He has participated in the production of the *1997 Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines*, and he has published extensively on the language question in education, as made obvious from my bibliography. Assoc. Prof. Tirvassen asked particular questions on how the test had been designed and on whether procedures to ensure validity had been followed. **Mrs Joseph** is a British-born native speaker of English married to a Mauritian. She owns what she claims to be a bilingual (French/English) preschool in Mauritius. I visited her preschool during the pilot stage of my thesis and went to her preschool to pilot test the test being designed for this study. On reviewing the test, she generally agreed with me on the level of difficulty of the vocabulary items included in the

⁶⁷ I here acknowledge the precious help of Ms Zakkiyah Nazroo and Ms Shahana Auleear.

test, that is, the words which I had categorised as Level 1 and Level 2 in Part 1 of Test 2. She suggested a few minor changes in the pictures, pointing out to me what she thought her students would be able to do and what they would find difficult. She also suggested that I use a song “Head, shoulder, Knees and Toes” as an ice-breaker, as the children I used for pilot testing the test were children I hardly knew.

9.3.5.2 Test reliability

The next challenge was to take measures that would ensure **test reliability** (this indicates the precision of the measuring instrument - Cohen, 2001: 525):

Pilot 2 - Test 2

10 children attending Mrs Joseph’s bilingual (French/English) preschool were submitted to **Pilot 2 - Test 2** on 19 January 2005. Mrs Joseph provided me with a table and two chairs under a tree in the garden, and the teachers were requested to send me 10 children one after another. Each test took approximately 15 minutes, which included the time for me to chat with the children in French to put them at their ease before starting the ‘game’. The testing took the whole day. Since Parts 1 and 2 of **Test 2** were long enough, the results obtained from the pilot testing of **Test 2** were subjected to the split-half reliability test. The correlation coefficient for Part 1 was 0.94 and the correlation coefficient for Part 2 was 0.82. Spearman-Brown was then computed to adjust the length of the test (McIntire & Miller, 2000). The coefficient for Part 1 was 0.97 and for Part 2 was 0.9. The correlation coefficients indicated that the two parts of **Test 2** were reliable enough to be used in my main study.

Main 2005 study

The reliability of **Test 2** was also computed from the results obtained from the main 2005 study. Kuder-Richardson 20 was found to be appropriate as (1) the test results for children from PSB were not normally distributed, (2) test-items could only be marked right or wrong, (3) the test was fairly homogenous (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005). The results are in Table 23: they indicate that **Test 2** has good to excellent reliability. A copy of **Test 2** is found in **Appendix V.2**.

Table 23: Reliability coefficient of Test 2 using Kr-20

			PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
			KR-20 =	KR-20 =
Pre-Test	Test 2 – Part 1	Level 1	0.93	0.94
		Level 2	0.82	0.9
	Test 2 – Part 2		0.77	0.79
Post-Test	Test 2 – Part 1	Level 1	0.99	0.7
		Level 2	0.93	0.9
	Test 2 – Part 2		0.96	0.98
		Average	0.9	0.87

9.4 Test administration and test results

9.4.1 Test administration

In PSA (n=13) and PSB (n=15), the children:

- were pre-tested during the week 24-28 January 2005 and post-tested during the week 10-14 October 2005: Although the school year ended on 11 November 2005, I post-tested the subjects before the CPE exams (17-24 October 2005: period when preschool children do not go to school) and before the children and teachers started preparing for their end-of-year show scheduled for the beginning of November;
- were tested in their own preschool;
- were administered **Test 1** and **Test 2** on different days;
- were administered the tests in individual sessions, which took 10-12 minutes per child per test.

9.4.2 Test results for PSA and PSB children

For the quantitative data analysis, SPSS was utilised (Field, 2005) for means, standard deviations, standard error difference, paired t-tests and independent t-tests.⁶⁸ The following questions were used to organise results for **Test 1** and **Test 2**:

- a) Are the two groups (PSA and PSB) comparable on the pre-test results?
- b) Have PSA students progressed over the year?
- c) Have PSB students progressed over the year?
- d) Have the two groups made similar progress over the year?

The pre-test and post-test results for **Test 1** are found in Table 24 and **Test 2** in Table 25.

Table 24: Test 1: pre- and post-test results

	Concepts of Print Max Marks=31		Attitudes to Print Max Marks=8		Letter Naming Max Marks=31	
	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
PRE-TEST						
Mean	17.54	18.6	1.69	2.6	8.23	4.73
Std.Dev.	2.58	4.05	1.03	1.35	8.66	5.4
Std.Error Mean	0.76	1.05	0.29	0.35	2.4	1.4
POST-TEST						
Mean	22	24.4	2.31	3.8	18.77	23.93
Std.Dev	2.86	2.9	2.45	0.94	7.1	5.43
Std. Error Mean	0.79	0.75	0.68	0.24	1.97	1.4

⁶⁸ Special thanks to colleagues from the University of Mauritius: Ms Caroline Ng, who advised me to use the very comprehensive Field (2005) book, and Mr Kalasopatan, who kindly indicated the relevant tests to use for the data analysis.

Table 25: Test 2: pre- and post-test results

	Level 1 Max Marks=52		Level 2 Max Marks=52		Maths Max Marks=50	
	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
PRE-TEST						
Mean	12.92	10	4.62	4.4	18.92	11.2
S.D.	10.19	7.52	5.44	3.56	8.74	5.99
POST-TEST						
Mean	23.85	49.73	17.69	42.13	35.08	43.73
S.D.	8.31	2.82	7.59	6.74	5.75	4.06

For a detailed statistical analysis of the different components of the tests, refer to Appendix W.

9.4.3 Analysis of test results

9.4.3.1 Test 1

The results for **Concepts of print** (Tasks 1A, B, and C) indicate that:

- Both groups were at a comparable level at the beginning of their final year at preschool;
- Both groups made statistically significant progress over the year, with students from PSB outperforming ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.4$) students from PSA on the post-test;
- Compared to PSA children (S.D: from 2.58 to 2.86), PSB children became more homogeneous in the post-test (S.D.: from 4.05 to 2.9).

The results for **Interest in print-related activities** (Tasks 1D) indicate that:

- Both groups were at a comparable level at the beginning of their final year at preschool;
- PSA subjects did not make statistically significant progress over their final preschool year, and became less homogeneous in the post-test (SD: from 1.03 to 2.45);

- PSB subjects made statistically significant progress ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.63$) over their final preschool year, and became more homogeneous as a group in the post-test (SD: from 1.35 to 0.94);
- PSB subjects outperformed (with only medium effect: $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.4$) the students from PSA on the post-test.

The results for **Letter naming and name-writing** (Tasks 1E, F, G, and H) indicate that:

- Both groups were at a comparable level at the beginning of their final year at preschool;
- Both groups made statistically significant progress (with a very large effect, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.86$ for PSA and $r = 0.93$ for PSB) over their final preschool year;
- PSB subjects outperformed (with only medium effect: $p < 0.05$, $r = 0.39$) PSA subjects on the post-test.

9.4.3.2 Test 2

The pre-test results on **Test 2** indicate that:

- PSA and PSB children were comparable at the beginning of the year on Levels 1 and 2, however, PSA subjects performed statistically significantly better ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.48$) than PSB subjects on the Maths component;
- Part 1 - Level 2 is in fact 'harder' than Part 1 - Level 1, since both groups did less well in that part of the test. Moreover, although PSB children (M: 42.13, SD: 6.74) outperformed PSA children (M: 17.69, SD: 7.79) on the post-test, both groups showed comparable disparities among individual students;
- PSA and PSB children started their final year of pre-primary education with comparatively more proficiency in the English version of mathematical concepts than for general English vocabulary items.

The comparison between pre-test and post-test results on **Test 2** indicates that:

- Both groups made statistically significant progress in the three parts of the test, after a year of attending their respective preschool programmes, with PSB children tending to perform more homogeneously than PSA children.

The comparison between PSA and PSB children of the post-test results of **Test 2** indicate that:

- PSB subjects, who underwent the OEIP, outperformed PSA subjects statistically significantly (large-sized effect), over all parts of Test 2;
- PSB subjects outperformed PSA subjects on the Maths post-test, despite the statistically significant advantage that PSA subjects had at the beginning of the year.

9.5 Discussion

9.5.1 Concepts of print

The pre- and post-test results on **concepts of print** indicate that their final preschool year experiences (at school and home) impacted on the PSA and PSB children's learning outcomes. However, a more detailed look at the test results on individual tasks reveals some finer distinctions that the combined results fail to show, as well as some problems inherent in the test design. The detailed results for these tasks are tabulated in Table 26, and they are discussed below.

Table 26: Detailed Results for Tasks 1A, 1B, 1C

Task	Max. Mk.	PSA (n=13)				PSB (n= 15)			
		PreT		PostT		PreT		PostT	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1A	6	2.31	1.43	4.07	1.89	2.4	1.45	4.93	1.28
1B	9	4.46	1.8	6.3	1.75	5.8	1.57	7.89	1.06
1C	16	10.77	2	11.4	1.66	10.4	2.16	11.6	2.59

The results for Tasks 1A and 1B, which made use of a storybook, revealed the children's familiarity and relationship with the book. While both groups developed positively in these tasks, the post-test results of PSB children indicate (1) more familiarity with the conventions of print and (2) more consistency in their responses, as compared with PSA children. This might be linked with the OEIP, which contained a strong storybook reading component.

Children's responses to Task 1C (in which they were asked to identify environmental print) revealed the problematic nature of the task. Although, logos were chosen from the local context, the choice of logos assumed that the children were exposed to similar brands. This proved to be an incorrect and bold assumption to make. The most striking example was that, apart from a couple of children from both groups (n=28), no child identified the *Pizza Hut* logo. This can be explained by the children's eating habits. Since the subjects for this research come from the lower middle class, they might not be going out much for fast food, which is now only slowly entering the Mauritian life style. This can also be explained by the price factor. Pizza eating seems to be less popular than *Kentucky Fried Chicken* eating (in fact, most children recognised the KFC logo) probably because the former is more expensive than the latter. Horner (2005) has argued that different children know different kinds of logos; this view is supported by the data obtained in this study.

The children's replies to the visual prompts were revealing of their own (home) experiences with print. Children often used the general noun, rather than the commercial name, to describe what they saw on the logos shown to them. For instance, the children tended to use the term 'toothpaste', whether they were shown *Colgate* or *Blendax* boxes. To me, this indicates that they are not exposed to reading what is on boxes, so their responses are their own experiences and knowledge of what the boxes contain. It is interesting to note that in one of the functional literacy activities, the PSA teacher had asked the students what is on a box, and s/he had replied "milk" and not the commercial name (Ch7.3.3.1, **Excerpt 14**). The children's response to the visual prompts also indicated that they might be responding to the context of print, rather than the print itself. Korat (2005: 224) suggests that children who recognise environmental print more often relate to the context of print (logo, package) than to the print itself. For that reason, an extra Task 1C(ii) was run with the children on the post-test only. In Task 1C(ii), I used only the printed material, while carefully removing the background, so that the children would not use contextual clues to guess the object being shown to them (photos in **Appendix V.1**). 14 objects were shown to them and the results are shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Results for extra Task 1C (ii) on the post-test

	PSA		PSB	
Max Mark: 14	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
Task 1C(ii)	6.46	1.94	7.2	3.12

The above results indicate that the children from PSA correctly identified 46% of the logos without background (compared with 71.25% of the logos with background), while the children from PSB correctly identified 51% of the logos without background, compared to 72.5% of the logos with background. These percentages indicate that the children from both groups are similar in their considerable use of the background to identify the logos being shown to them. In **Task 1C (ii)**, it was again noted that the children showed a tendency to use general nouns to describe what they saw rather than the commercial name and exact word(s) shown to them in print.

Finally, it was noted that children from PSA and PSB differed in their response to one logo:

- **Task 1C (i):** 8 (of the 15 children) in PSB said that *Coca* logo was the *Pepsi* logo, compared to only 1 at PSA;
- **Task 1C (ii):** 4 (of the 15 children) in PSB said that the *Coca* logo was in fact *Pepsi*, while none did so in PSA.

This general confusion between *Pepsi* and *Coca* can be explained by the fact that the two are tough competitors in Mauritius. However, a closer look at the names of the children indicates that 8 (of the 10) children who identified *Coca* as being *Pepsi* are Muslims. Any person who knows the business world in Mauritius knows that the distributor for *Pepsi* is Muslim, so that Muslims generally tend to buy *Pepsi*, for everyday consumption as well as for religious ceremonies and wedding parties. In this case, only knowledge of the local context, with its local, business, political dynamics, can throw light on some behaviours that appear as remote as EL.

Although the test results help to show that the children might be at a similar level with respect to concepts of environmental print, the results for Task 1C indicate that they should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

9.5.2 Interest in print-related activities

Task 1D was designed to test children's interest in print-related activities. In general terms, PSA and PSB children's results, on both the pre- and post-tests, indicate that they have low interest in literacy related activities. The means indicate 2.3 and 3.6 over 8 on the post-test for PSA and PSB children respectively. This seems to me to have to do with the way of life in Mauritius, where:

- Children generally live in houses with gardens (even if these are small);
- The weather and the setting are conducive to outdoor playing;
- Indoor and educational games are not popular and can be expensive;
- There does not seem to be a reading culture in the school (refer to Ch7.4.4 for PSA) or at home (refer to Ch8.4.2 for PSA and PSB).

However, it can be noted from the post-test results that the experimental subjects from PSB have become more homogeneous in their interest in literacy-related activities (S.D. on pre-test=1.35, on post-test=0.94) while the children from PSA have become less homogeneous (S.D. on pre-test=1.03, on post-test=2.45). It is possible that the OEIP, which included regular contact with picture books and English storybooks, might have had an impact on their interest in literacy-related activities. This seems to confirm the hypothesis that children will show an interest if they associate literacy experiences with positive, enjoyable interactions (Scarborough & Dobrich, 1994 & Snow, 1994, cited in Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002: 319). It must, however, be acknowledged that this positive impact is medium ($p < 0.01$, $r = 0.63$). This could be related to the fact that despite being exposed to print materials in the OEIP, PSB children still had too little exposure to have a large effect on their interest in print-related materials and activities. A 15-minute session every alternate day is not enough to impact strongly on children's interest in print.

9.5.3 Letter naming/writing and name writing

The analysis of the test results for the individual tasks reveals the particular skills on which the subjects improved.

Table 28: Detailed results for Tasks 1E, 1F, 1G, 1H

Task	Max. Mk.	PSA (n=13)				PSB (n= 15)			
		PreT		PostT		PreT		PostT	
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1E	10	3.5	3.9	8.84	1.86	5.3	4.8	9.3	1.86
1F	10	1.69	2.75	4.07	3.6	0.7	1.27	7.13	2.85
1G	5	2.15	2.23	4.38	3.61	1.87	1.77	4.8	0.41
1H	6	0.84	1.34	1.46	2.14	0.2	1.34	2.73	1.33

Results on Task 1E, which tested subjects' rote knowledge of the first ten letters of the alphabet, indicate that by the end of the year, most children from both preschools, and in a homogeneous manner (S.D: 1.86) knew the first ten letters of the alphabet by rote. It must be said that the rote teaching, singing or repetition of letters was never observed in PSA (Ch7), nor was it observed in PSB. However, T1 from PSA mentioned in an informal interview that the alphabet song was taught because parents expected their children to learn their letters at school. Moreover, the interview with the mothers indicated that a lot of importance was given to knowing the alphabet.

Compared with results on Task 1E, results on Task 1F, which tested subjects' recognition of the relationship between letter-name and symbol, indicate that while subjects knew the names of the alphabet by heart, they could not necessarily recognise individual letters of the alphabet. This is typical of the culture of rote-learning observed in developing countries, where more emphasis is laid on parrot alphabet knowledge than actual alphabet recognition. Furthermore, the more uniform progress made by PSB children (S.D.: 2.85) compared with their PSA peers (S.D.: 3.6) might indicate more parental support, which only a more ethnographic approach to the investigation of the home literacy environment can address. This is outside the scope of this research.

Results for Task IH, where children's ability to write down six letters of the alphabet was assessed, reveal that both groups of children could write less than half of the letters dictated to them on the post-test. Compared with Task 1E, it appears more difficult for the children to write down the letters than it is to recognise them. Similar to Task IF, the more uniform progress made by PSB children (S.D.: 1.33) compared to their PSA peers (S.D.: 2.14) might indicate more parental support.

Results on Task IG, where children were asked to write down their names, show that almost all children could write their names fully by the end of the year (Refer to Table 29). According to Bloodgood (1999: 342), name writing is a social accomplishment, and it has the potential to help children connect literacy strands in a meaningful way. Moreover, this ability to write their names tallies with the classroom observations in both preschools where the children are taught to write their names, through repeated copying, throughout the year (Ch7.3.2). However, it can be noted that although PSA subjects were slightly ahead of PSB children on the pre-test, the latter caught up to perform better on the post-test. The fact that PSB children produced more homogenous results (S.D.: 0.41) than PSA children (S.D.: 3.61) on the post-test might indicate more parental support in PSB.

Table 29: Examples of name writing on the pre- and post-test

Name writing on the pre-test	Name writing on the post-test
HPir	Boja
A mei	Amelia
Ambika	Ambikah
hπ	Aimqll
Qdy v	Yadav
Zoya	Zoulaykhab

9.5.4 Test 2

9.5.4.1 Pre-test

The pre-test results for PSA and PSB children show that preschoolers tend to start their final preschool year with very limited oral English proficiency. This is reflective of the home context, which is embedded in the sociolinguistic context, both of which present an English “acquisition poor” (Tickoo, 1993) environment.

Moreover, the pre-test results indicate that the words, which at least half the number of children from both preschools seemed to be familiar with, were *nose*, *shorts*, *shoes*, *pencil*, *apple*, *banana*, and *fish*. Regarding *shorts* and *banana*, both words phonetically resemble the French *short* and *banane*. Ellis & Beaton (1993, cited in Macaro, 2003: 84) argue that words, which are acoustically and orthographically similar to L1 words, are easier to understand, learn and recall than dissimilar words. The other words fall into two categories. The first consists of *nose* and *shoes* which parents are often heard using with their children within the Kreol discourse, for instance, parents will say “Mette to shoes” [put on your shoes] rather than “Mette to souliers/chaussures” because of the comparative simplicity of the English word. The second consists of *pencil*, *apple* and *fish*, which seem to be some of the simple words that teachers and parents often teach to their children. PSA teachers have also been observed to use the English words and drawings of *apples* and *fish* in the mathematical worksheets.

Finally, the preschoolers’ better performance on the Maths part of the pre-test indicates that they are already taught numbers, colours, shapes, counting at school or at home before they start their final preschool year. This is suggestive of what is perceived as the more important skills for the children to develop early in their preschool years (at home or at school).

9.5.4.2 Post-test

As far as learning outcomes are concerned, the post-test results for PSA and PSB children indicate that children’s progress in oral English after a year spent in the preschool is more than just chance occurrence. It can thus be suggested that their preschool programme

(regular in PSA and OEIP in PSB) did impact on their learning experience. For the PSA children, despite the limitations in terms of materials, teacher training and teaching methodology, the quantitative data suggest that PSA teachers were nevertheless able to help the preschoolers develop some oral English proficiency. However, a more qualitative look at the test results (**Appendix W**) reveals that the progress made by PSA and PSB children is of a particular kind and needs to be accounted for.

As far as **general English words** are concerned, PSA subjects showed greatest progress between pre- and post-test in the section on body parts (they have moved from an average of 22% to 63% correct answers in Level 1). Conversely, their progress in other parts of the test is far less striking:

- Body parts, Level 2: From 5% to 27%;
- General English, Level 1: from 24% to 38%;
- General English, Level 2: from 10% to 28%.

PSA learners' progress on body parts can possibly be explained by the fact that teachers regularly taught body parts over the year, whereas they did not use this same reiterative approach with the other vocabulary items taught thematically over the year (Ch6.4.3). The qualitative data thus reveal that the progress, which is apparent from the means in the pre-test and post-test results of PSA children, does not reflect general progress in Oral English proficiency, but progress with respect to their knowledge of body parts, which actually constitutes the first lesson in the Std1 EVS textbook.

With respect to the **Maths** vocabulary, it is interesting to observe that as a result of PSA teachers' regular and insistent teaching of Mathematical concepts in English (Ch6.4.3), PSA children progressed from 37% to 70% correct answers. As far as **colours** are concerned, the colours that PSA children acquired after their final preschool year are: *orange* (77%), *blue* (77%), *green* (54%), *red* (46%) and *yellow* (46%). The fact that *orange* and *blue* are pronounced similarly in English and French could explain the reason for which children find it easier to memorise the English words for these colours. It can also be noted that apart from orange, the four other colours with which PSA children

tended to be familiar with were the primary colours. This brings us to the classroom observation where it was noticed that the teachers tended to directly and indirectly (the colours of the national flag) teach the primary colours (Ch6.3.3, **Excerpt 5**). The comparative progress made by PSB subjects on all colours indicates that a planned programme can help children acquire the names of the colours over the year.

As far as **shapes** are concerned, the pre-test results indicate that the *square* (for PSA and PSB children) and the *circle* (for PSA children) are the two shapes that at least half the children were familiar with. It is interesting to note that PSA children did not make any progress over the year - there are not more children who knew *square* and *circle* at the end of the year. The only shape that some children seem to have learnt is the *triangle*, and again this can be related to the fact that the same word, with a similar pronunciation, is used in French. Conversely, PSB children improved considerably in their knowledge of the names of the various shapes. The shapes they performed best on being the *star* (93%) and the *circle* (87%). It seems to me that PSB children's familiarity with the word *star* is, in part, related to the fact that the song 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' was taught to the children and to the fact that they were taught the word *star* as an English word using flash cards.

As for **rote counting**, the test results indicate that both groups of children could already count by rote in English (82 % for the PSA and 59% for PSB) when they entered their final year at pre-primary school, with the children from PSA being ahead of those from PSB. At the beginning of the year, all the test subjects in PSA could already count from *one* to *five* by rote, whereas 93% of the children from PSB could recite *one* to *four* by rote. By the end of the year, all the subjects from both groups (PSA/PSB) could count *one* to *ten* by rote. I would argue that this is linked to the fact that preschool teachers and parents perceive counting in English as an important skill to develop before going to primary school.

Finally, on the **number concept**, both groups were at a comparably low level at the beginning of the year and both groups could recognise the numbers by the end of the

year. It must be said that the teachers from both schools spent time in their daily lesson plan teaching the children to count and to recognise *one* to *ten* in English. In fact, PSA teachers have been observed spending 20 to 30 minutes a day painstakingly teaching the children to count and to recognise numbers, a skill that many of them had or were in the process of developing (Ch6.3.3.1: Code-mixing: technical/key vocabulary). It must here be admitted that the children were taught the mathematical symbols over the year, an area that is outside the scope of this research. The pre-test and post-test results, as well as the longitudinal classroom observations in PSA, indicate that there might be a problem with the allocation of time as far as the teaching of number concepts is concerned. Indeed, teachers spent 20 - 30 minutes daily teaching number concepts many children already knew - time was thus not used maximally. It is arguable that the lack of assessment at the beginning of the year hinders teachers from knowing the children's familiarity with numbers, thus hampering them in the effective planning of their work. Or it can also be argued that the teachers did not take into account what the learners knew, they simply carried on with the pre-determined programme - a programme whose main aim is to prepare the children for Std1. I would support the latter argument to the extent that my observations in PSA indicated that the children already knew how to count in English - the children often loudly said or recited their English numbers in the Mathematics slot in front of the teachers (and in front of me, as I was there).

9.5.5 Short phrases and adjectives

The 2003PPG clearly recommend that short commands and word exposure be used with children as part of the introduction to English. Given that the OEIP was based on the 2003PPG, it included an exposure to short commands (through the use of TPR) and adjectives. PSA and PSB teachers had also claimed to use simple commands like *stand up* and *sit down* and adjectives like *big/small* and *full/empty*, during the stage where the test was being conceived. However, while I failed to observe the use of short commands in PSA, I observed that adjectives were taught once during my yearlong visits in PSA (*big/small*, *full/empty*). Conversely, I had myself regularly used short commands with PSB children as part of the OEIP: I had used TPR with PSB children as an outdoor game, where the children were given instructions about what to do, as well as through the

song ‘Ring-O-Roses’ which was adapted to include short commands in it (**Appendix U**). Children loved singing and playing outdoors and thus did not ‘notice’ that they were learning English. This disparity between the teaching and learning situation in PSA and PSB led me to exclude the test results for short phrases/adjectives from the overall test results as this would have computed overall poorer test results for PSA. However, it was interesting to see that the mean for PSB children on both parts of the test was very high, with high internal consistency as well.

Table 30: Pre- and post-test results: Imperatives/adjectives

	PSA (n=13)	PSB (n=15)
Imperatives (Max. Marks = 20)	Pre-test mean: 0 Post-test mean: 0.15	Pre-test mean: 0 Post-test mean: 18.5 Post-Test S.D: 2.3
Adjectives (Max Marks = 12)	Pre-test mean: 0 Post-test mean: 0.92	Pre-test mean: 0 Post-test mean: 8.8 Post-Test S.D.: 2.5

The above results clearly show that at this age, whatever children are taught in a repetitive and playfully meaningful manner, they will learn.

9.6 Summary of Chapter 9

In this chapter, I have briefly described the OEIP, in which I was involved with the children in PSB, throughout 2005 as part of a quasi-experimental design. I have also discussed the challenges of designing a test to assess the children’s EL in the local FL context. The pre- and post-test results indicate that:

- On the pre-test, both groups are at a comparable level on all aspects of the tests;
- Both groups made statistically significant progress in **concepts of print, letter naming & name writing and oral English;**

- However, both groups showed progress in their rote knowledge of the alphabet and in writing their names, but comparatively less proficiency in recognising and writing the alphabet letters;
- Although PSA and PSB children made progress in oral English, the qualitative data analysis showed that the progress for PSA children was characterised by the children's better performance in the vocabulary Arelated to body parts and Maths (rote counting and number concept);
- PSB made statistically significantly more progress in English than PSA children, and this progress was an overall progress, which can be related to the OEIP.
- While PSB children progressed statistically significantly in their **interest in print-related activities**, PSA children did not;

The test results, which quantify PSA and PSB children's learning outcomes, suggest that there are language benefits (oral English) from having a structured English language programme for PSB children. If the programme contains a storybook reading component, there might also be benefits in terms of increasing children's interest in print-related materials.

CHAPTER 10

Interpreting the findings

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to bring together the data generated, analysed and interpreted separately in Ch5 to Ch9, so as to address the three main research questions articulated in Ch1.8:

In the context where English, as a foreign language, is the main language of literacy and the main written medium of instruction throughout the Mauritian education system:

RQ1: What factors account for preschoolers' early literacy experiences?

RQ2: What are the outcomes of these early literacy experiences?

RQ3: How far do these experiences prepare them to use English as main language of literacy and main written medium of instruction in Std 1?

Before engaging in a more holistic interpretation of the data, I will synthesise the main findings obtained in Ch5 to 9 in Ch10.1. Then, by focusing on the role of the school (without ignoring the role of the home) in exposing PSA children to oral English and pre-reading/writing, I will address **RQ1** in Ch10.2 – 10.3. Finally, I will consider PSA children's readiness for the language situation awaiting them in Std1, by addressing **RQs 2 & 3** in Ch10.4.

10.2 Synthesis of research findings

The main findings flowing from **SRQs(i – xii)**, as they appear in Ch1.8, can be summed up in the following terms:

10.2.1 Curriculum and teacher training

SRQ (i):

- Since English is the *de facto* LoL and written MoI as from Std1, the preschool curriculum points out the importance of English in the education system, by advising daily exposure to English in relation to the theme being worked on (203PPG: 38, 40).
- The policy documents fail to take into account the fact that, in the local context, English is rarely heard and rarely used. Hence, they remain vague as to the desired English language teaching approaches and methods to use in order to enhance the teaching and learning of oral English in the local context.
- The documents emphasise the importance of immersing children in print (Ch5.3.2-5.3.3) and they support a whole language approach to literacy instruction, suggesting that preschool teachers should write in Kreol.
- The documents stress storybook reading as a means to prepare “habitual and independent readers” (Ch5.3.2-5.3.3).
- The documents are unclear about desired learning outcomes for oral English and pre-reading/writing.

10.2.2 Teachers

SRQ(ii – iii):

- When PSA teachers use English, it is part of extended French discourse.
- PSA teachers feel the need to introduce children to English because they feel the pressure exerted by the contents of the Std1 textbooks.
- In the absence of appropriate teacher training and in the context of their own limited proficiency and fluency in English,
 - PSA teachers have been observed to use rituals and linguistic routines in English, as well as verbal strategies (such as code-switching and

questioning) as the main oral English language teaching strategy (Ch6.4.1);

- PSA teachers tend to emphasise the English vocabulary related to Maths (rote counting and number concept) and body parts, words that are found at the beginning of the Std1 Maths and EVS textbooks. They also expose children to English vocabulary, but this is done in a less structured and repetitive manner (Ch6.4.3).

SRQ(iv-v):

- PSA surround the children with print but fail to make much functional and enjoyable use of that print (Ch7.3.1).
- While PSA teachers model school and work literacies to the children, they fall short of modelling other types of functional and entertaining literacy activities (Ch7.3.2).
- PSA make a timid use of the skills-based approach in the class, by using the *ad hoc* letter-copying and regular word-copying strategies (Ch7.3.3).
- Books are rarely used in class and storybooks seldom read: this seems related to PSA teachers' own reading culture and the language barrier. It might be hard for them to read English books to children whose L1 is Kreol, and who understand very little English (Ch7.3.4).

10.2.3 Learners

SRQ (vi):

- Learners come from homes where Kreol is the home language, and where English is hardly ever heard or used as a social language.

SRQ (vii):

- Like teachers, parents also tend to teach individual lexical items to their children, emphasising the words found in the Std1 textbooks. In brief, they seem to use the Std1 syllabus as a template for their choice of what to teach to their children (Ch8.4.3).

SRQ(viii):

- Print is available in homes, and parents tend to read newspapers (Ch8.3.2, 8.4.2).
- Although religious texts and prayers have an important place in homes, they tend to be read and recited with little comprehension (Ch8.3.2).
- Parents use the copying strategy to introduce their children to pre-reading and pre-writing (Ch8.3.3, 8.4.3).
- Parents infrequently read storybooks to their children: this might be related to the language barrier and their own reading culture (Ch8.3.4, 8.4.2).

SRQ(ix):

- Parents value English as the language of education (Ch8.4.1).
- Parents expect preschool teachers to teach their children simple English words and basic decoding skills, like the alphabet (Ch8.3.5).
- Parents expect teachers to read to their children 2-3 times a week, as an entertaining activity (Ch8.3.5).

10.2.4 Learning outcomes**SRQ(x):**

- PSA children show significant progress in oral English: this progress is largely determined by their knowledge of vocabulary related to Maths and body parts (Ch9.5.4).

SRQ(xi):

- PSA children show significant progress in concepts of print, rote knowledge of the alphabet and name writing, but less in the recognition and writing of the alphabet (Ch9.5.1, 9.5.3).
- PSA children show little interest in print-related activities at the beginning of the year, and make no significant progress over the year (Ch9.5.2).

SRQ(xii):

- An Oral English Intervention Programme in a preschool similar to PSA, PSB, shows that a structured oral English language programme, using a language

teaching approach appropriate for young children (TPR) and regular storybook reading in English, can lead to significant progress in oral English (general English and technical Maths vocabulary) (Ch9.4).

- The OEIP reveals that it is more difficult to positively impact on PSB children's interest in print-related activities (Ch9.5).

If the above synthesis is used as a basis for examining and interpreting the teaching and learning experiences of PSA teachers and learners over the children's final preschool year, it is apparent that there is a certain mismatch between the intended and the taught curriculum, with an impact on the attained curriculum and hidden curriculum (Ch3.6.4). The subsequent sections attempt to consider the synergy between the various aspects of the curriculum in the Mauritian context.

10.3 From policy to practice...

In this sub-section, I argue that because the Mauritian education system operates in the shadow of a colonial LiEP (the 1957 Education Ordinance - Ch2.4.2), the preschool curriculum is hesitant to take a clear and unambiguous stance on the function(s) of various languages, including English, and on the issue of the language of literacy. This has a trickle-down effect on teacher training, and classroom practices.

10.3.1 The effects of a colonial LiEP on the intended preschool curriculum

It seems to me that the main reason for which the 2003PPG deals with the language issue in "vague" terms (Cameron, 2001: 28) is that the preschool curriculum has been written in the shadow of a colonial LiEP (Ch2.4.2). This LiEP leaves it to the discretion of the "Minister" to choose "any one language [...] as the medium of instruction" (1957 Education Ordinance) in the pre-Std4 phase. Such "tensions inherent in the policy" (Martin, 2005: 94) have a snowball effect, creating a space for uneasiness and conflict around the choices of language(s) of instruction and literacy in the preschool sector.

This tension is felt among curriculum writers themselves. Since the 2003PPG curriculum writers have different and strong views about the issue of LoL and MoI (**AppendixE.2**)

since they wrote the curriculum in the context of a hazy language situation and in the context of the rejection of the 1997PPG (Ch2.4.8), it can be expected that they pushed forward their own views about the issue during the writing up of the 2003PPG. This would have created tension among them and the only way to address these tensions would be to arrive at a compromise. On this issue, Laloumi-Vidali (1998) argues that if various stakeholders work in collaboration and consensus, there are improved outcomes; conversely, Laloumi-Vidali (1998) says that serious dissonance among the views of the various stakeholders has the potential to impact negatively on young children. In the particular case of Mauritius, it seems to me that the compromise among different curriculum writers, who have differing views on the languages that should be part of preschool education, is a false compromise with critical ramifications for the curriculum. This compromise has apparently led to a situation where the curriculum fails to spell out in clear terms the functions of the various languages (Ch5.3), it falls short of setting objectives and articulating intended outcomes for language and literacy (especially English, given its *de facto* function as LoL and main written MoI in Std1), despite the fact that it sees itself as an outcomes-based curriculum (Ch5.5.1). Moreover, the curriculum does not adequately address the essential question of a linguistic preparation for Std1, where English is the main LoL and only written MoI. Hence, it does not create an environment conducive to providing preschool teachers with relevant pre-/in-service teacher training (Ch5.5.2), so as to help them initiate preschoolers to language and literacy in the local context.

The tension at the level of policy document arguably has a snowball effect on curriculum implementation. In principle, having a curriculum helps determine the knowledge and skills learners should develop (Ch3.6.4). However, vagueness at the level of the documents becomes a cause of potential difficulty at the level of implementation. On this issue, Webb (2002: 182) quotes Bamgbose (1991: 111), to suggest that when curriculum writers use the strategy of “avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation” in the curriculum, it might become an alibi for non-implementation, which might be the case in Mauritius. One word of caution is, nonetheless, required. Although it would be simple to hold the writers’ (2003PPG) use of “avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation”

in the curriculum responsible for classroom practices in PSA, one must remain sensitive to the local realities. First, the post-observation interviews indicated that PSA teachers were not very familiar with the 2003PPG (Ch5.4). Secondly, the local context is one where teachers are neither used to nor trained to work with a curriculum. The discussion on primary education (Ch2.4.4, 2.4.5) indicates that teachers and pupils are accustomed to using set textbooks, which contain the aims, objectives and contents of each subject area, throughout their education system. It might thus be over-ambitious to expect Mauritian preschool teachers to implement the curriculum, without adequate pre-/in-service teacher training. It, therefore, appears to me that the teacher-training course might have a critical role to play in preparing teachers to face the complexities of classroom realities.

10.3.2 The inability of the TTM to mediate between the recommended and the taught curriculum

Teacher-training programmes are expected to guide teachers in their implementation of the curriculum. However, an analysis of the TTM indicates that two strategies are adopted in dealing with teachers' training on the issue of oral English and literacy: **the avoidance strategy** and **the textbook approach**, both of which fail to support teachers in their everyday classroom practices.

10.3.2.1 The avoidance strategy

Also written in the shadow of the colonial LiEP, the TTM take the same evasive approach as the 2003PPG with respect to the exposure to oral English. Hence, they fail to propose approaches to language teaching that would be appropriate for imparting a FL to young learners and they leave Mauritian preschool teachers to their own devices when it comes to choosing a language teaching approach (Ch5.3.3). The episode when T1 was struggling to teach the concepts of *on/under* in three languages indicates the feeling of helplessness that preschool teachers can feel in the face of a lack of training on appropriate teaching approaches in a multilingual context (**Appendix O.2**). Indeed, the preschool teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the TT course (Ch5.4), saying it is too theoretical and lacks information on how to teach English to young learners of

English. Such dissatisfaction among teachers seems common in developing countries. In the various countries where the SACMEQ study has been conducted, including Mauritius, it can be observed that teachers are generally dissatisfied with their teacher training experiences. For instance, in the Seychelles (SACMEQ, 2003: 154), only 12.4% of pupils had teachers who rated the English language-teaching course as effective, while in Mauritius only 35% of pupils had teachers who expressed satisfaction with the in-service courses, and “this casts doubt on the quality of courses” (SACMEQ, 2003: 6). In South Africa, 30.2% teachers found the teacher training for reading instruction effective or very effective, while 41.9% teachers in Swaziland, and 29.1% in Malawi found the same. Similarly, Tercanlioglu (2001) says that 48.5% of pre-service teachers rate their teacher education programme in preparing them to teach reading as ineffective in Turkey. In this respect, in the 1990’s, Young (1995: 108) had already strongly recommended the need for teacher training as a means to help teachers to cope with the demands of teaching through the medium of an L2. A review of the situation in a number of countries, including Mauritius, indicates that teacher training courses have not yet managed to provide adequate support to teachers teaching language and literacy in second or foreign language contexts.

As a result of the inadequate teacher training, as described in Ch6.3.2-6.3.3, PSA teachers used mostly linguistic routines, code-switching and questioning as language teaching strategies. However, Mauritian preschool teachers are in a different situation from other teachers on the African continent, who have been observed to retain old styles of language teaching in the face of new approaches introduced by education authorities that employ them (Shaalukeni, 2000, Tesfamariam, 2000 cited in Weideman & van Rensburg, 2002: 160). Mauritian preschool teachers have not been provided with the pedagogical tools to teach English, a FL, effectively to young children.

10.3.2.2 The textbook approach

With reference to its sections on language and literacy, reading and writing and storybook reading (Ch5.3.3), the TTM adopt the ‘textbook approach’ by borrowing a theoretical framework that draws heavily on child language and literacy experiences in monolingual

and developed countries, and by failing to address the practical question of implementation in the local context. This transnational transfer of knowledge, theories, models and methods from monolingual developed countries to multilingual developing countries, done in an uncritical manner and without taking into account the local context (Kanu, 2005: 494; O'Donoghue, 1994; Zadjia, 2004), becomes apparent in the face of the data collected.

Language and literacy

The TTM endorse the EL approach, in the form of a set of proposals: literacy learning starts early in life; reading and writing develop concurrently; literacy develops from real life situations; children should engage actively with literacy; reading is important; and reading and writing are developmental processes (P4: 16). However, as discussed in the Literature Review, most of the work on EL has emerged from first language contexts, like America. Consequently, this literature makes some assumptions about children's home language and literacy practices, which are not necessarily met by the subjects we collected data from. For instance, unlike their middle class, American, L1 speaker-monolingual peers:

- who are immersed in meaningful print from a very young age in a language that they speak, Mauritian children are hardly exposed to print in their L1 (Ch7.4.1);
- who are socialised into entertaining picture and story book reading, PSA/PSB children are not flooded in pleasurable reading materials and reading sessions in their homes (Ch8.4.2) or at the preschool (Ch7.4.4);
- who are exposed to the use of reading and writing for functional purposes, PSA children's exposure to print seems to be largely a schooled type of literacy, with some emphasis on direct instruction and a skills-based approach to literacy instruction (Ch7.4.2, 8.4.3);
- who are exposed to books in their own language, PSA/PSB children have no access to Kreol books (Ch7.4.4).

In the face of such substantial disparities between the context where the literature on EL emerged and the local context, the appropriateness of such an approach as EL is not immediately clear (Hudelson, 1994, cited in Cameron, 2001: 146). The only way to render this approach relevant would have been through teacher training, which would have guided teachers in implementing an EL approach in the local classrooms. However, by being too theoretical, the TTM do not provide this guidance. Hence, PSA teachers have limited understanding of EL (Ch5.4), and they put into practice the little they have gathered from the course, like providing print-rich environment (although limited reference and use is made of this print), and they make children copy what they see on a box ('Functional literacy' activities, Ch7.3.3). In sum, PSA teachers are unable to adapt their understanding of EL to the realities and constraints of the local setting; they are unable to optimally implement EL in the local context.

Oral Proficiency: the foundations of literacy

In line with all the literature on EL (Ch3.4), the TTM diligently assert that "oral proficiency is the basis for all literacy" (P4: 7), acknowledging the importance of oral proficiency as the stepping-stone into the world of literacy. However, the question of the language in which children must have well-developed oral skills to be able to make a smooth transition into the world of formal literacy (which is English in Mauritius) is a fundamental, but thorny, question, which is evaded by the TTM's textbook approach. Therefore, if and when preschool teachers ask questions about the language in which they should aim at developing children's proficiency, and the level of proficiency they should expect the preschoolers to reach, they will find no answer. Although PSA teachers intuitively feel that they have to expose children to English to prepare them to read and write in Std1, they are left in uncertainty, with respect to (1) the rationale for exposing children to English, (2) the goals and objectives they should set themselves, and (3) the standards they should aim to meet.

Reading and writing: 'the whole language approach'

While the TTM describe the 'whole word/language approach' (C4: 18-22; P8: 104) and the 'phonic approach' (C4: 22) to literacy instruction, they emphasise the former

approach for the Mauritian preschool context and they tend to be critical of the latter approach. In fact, the relevance of the phonics approach in the local context might be doubtful as children learn English (oral and written) almost simultaneously: Verhoeven (1994) argues that children who do not know the meaning of words will experience phonic mediation as a meaningless rote procedure.

However, it appears that by pushing forward the whole language approach (refer to Ch 3.6.3), where “the teacher uses as nearly as possible the language of the children, keeping change to an absolute minimum as this is the language that the children will in turn ‘read’”(C4: 21), the TT course has remained insensitive to the local context. The data indicate that Kreol is the main L1 of children in PSA/PSB (and probably, most preschools), and thus preschool children do speak, describe and recall in Kreol (Ch6.3.1, 8.3.1). The data, however, indicate that teachers are by and large neither trained to read and write in Kreol nor used to doing so because Mauritians are literate in the European languages. I here say ‘by and large’ because preschool teachers who are trained by the FPSP are trained to read and write in Kreol. They are also trained to teach literacy in Kreol to children. However, there are relatively few FPSP preschools, and not all the teachers who have been trained to use Kreol do so when they work in Government preschools. One of the preschool teachers in PSB has been trained by the FPSP, and has been taught to teach literacy in Kreol. Yet, she said that she never used this resource in class. Hence, expecting teachers to put into writing the children’s Kreol utterances would be a challenge for them.

In any case, if teachers did choose to write the children’s oral Kreol words on their drawings, the next challenge for the teachers would be to decide on a spelling system. Kreol has only recently been provided with a standard orthography (produced in September 2004), but no national dictionaries or grammars using that accepted graph are yet available. In that case, teachers would run the risk of spelling the same word differently depending on when they are writing. A lack of uniform spelling would also be problematic. Anyhow, PSA teachers (and the majority of preschool teachers involved

in this research) and parents have expressed their reservations about introducing Kreol as LoL and written MoI (**Appendix N.6**, Ch8.3.5).

Apart from being insensitive to the linguistic realities of the local context, the TTM have also disregarded the relevance of the critiques to the whole language approach in the local context. According to Baynham (1995: 180), the underlying assumption of the whole language approach is that learning to read is a natural process and that, if teachers create conditions of a print-rich environment, with relevant and interesting materials and means for learners to have access to them, then reading will develop naturally. This myth of natural reading and writing (Wren, 2002) underplays the significance of explicit instruction in reading development. As Baynham argues, there are limitations in attributing such importance to guessing, prediction, and reliance in the reading process as the whole language approach does. The idea that reading develops automatically is even more problematical in Mauritius where there is a mismatch between the local *lingua franca* and the dominant languages of reading and writing.

Finally, it must also be said that the falling standards of literacy have been attributed (rightly or wrongly) to the whole-language, meaning-based movement of the 1970s and 1980s, and the international scene has witnessed a return to the teaching of basic decoding skills, a return to phonics, in such countries as the USA, UK and South Africa (Street, 2003b: 78). Although I am not here saying that Mauritius should reject a whole language approach, in favour of a phonics approach, I am suggesting that the literacy instruction is a multifaceted issue that needs to be considered in all its complexity and *in situ*. As discussed in Ch3.6.3, the language of literacy and its phoneme-grapheme relation, as well as the context of literacy learning and teaching, will impact on the approach to literacy instruction.

Storybook reading

In its sections on storybook reading, the TTM (refer to P4: 19-21; P8: 37-38; C3: 42) faithfully reiterate the contents of the vast literature on the benefits of storybook reading (Anderson & Stokes, 1984 and Edwards, 1994, cited in Ortiz *et al.*, 2001). As a result of

this emphasis on the importance of reading in the TTM, and also convinced of the importance of reading, PSA teachers regularly plan storybook reading sessions in their weekly plans (Ch7.4.4). However, they read less often than appears in their weekly plans - like the TTM, they also use the avoidance strategy. This failure on the teachers' part to put into practice what appears in theory can be explained by the local context, which points out the problematic nature of storybook reading.

The local reading culture is one that does not necessarily value pleasurable storybook reading. For instance, PSA teachers, as well as PSA/PSB parents, indicate that regular reading for pleasure is not part of their daily practices (Ch8.4.2). Rather, for parents and teachers alike, reading and writing are a school practice and a school concern, not an everyday out-of-school practice. As an out-of-school literacy practice, reading limits itself largely to weekly newspaper reading and possibly, the reading (with or without understanding) of sacred and religious texts (Ch7.4.4 & 8.4.2).

The data in this research also indicate that the **language barrier** might come in the way of storybook reading. Most storybooks in the local context (and in the classroom libraries) are in English and French. In fact, most preschool classroom libraries, which I visited during the pilot and main studies, contain mostly (albeit exclusively) English and French books, with hardly any Kreol books. Since the children do not easily understand the books read to them in French and English, languages that are respectively second and foreign to them, the teachers and parents might be avoiding reading to them because reading in a language the children are not familiar with is a challenge for them. In fact, parents who claimed to read to their children, reported reading and translating the storybooks for their children (Ch8.3.3). By means of example and although I acknowledge the methodological limitations to the storybook session observation in PSA (Ch7.3.4), it was noted that the teacher chose a French book (and not English, possibly because French and Kreol are to a certain extent mutually intelligible) despite the fact that she knew that I was interested in the teaching of English. Furthermore, the reading session was characterised by constant translation into Kreol. In such multilingual settings, Bloch and Edwards (1999: 615) mention bilingual story telling as a desirable

story reading strategy. However, they fail to discuss the practical implications of this story reading technique. Apart from preschool teachers, parents who claimed to read to their children, also reported reading and translating the storybooks for their children (Ch8.3.3).

Such translation, characteristic of storybook reading in the Mauritian context, suggests that (1) the teachers and parents do not expect the children to understand the story if it is not translated, (2) storybook reading can be a linguistic challenge for the story teller as well as for the listener, and (3) storybook reading becomes a time- and energy-consuming activity rather than an enjoyable one. It seems that between 95% (evidence cited in Carrell & Grabe, 2002) and 98% (Nation, 2001, cited in Macaro, 2003: 63) vocabulary/tokens in a text should be comprehended for reading (or understanding when someone is reading) to have a pleasurable effect (Ch3.5.2). It is doubtful that PSA/PSB children possess that breadth of vocabulary (especially, of that type found in books), be it in French or English, to understand and enjoy French/English storybook reading (pre-test results indicate limited proficiency in English - Ch9.4.2, Table 25). As for books in Kreol, it is a fact that few storybooks are produced in Kreol for pre-schoolers in Mauritius. The few that have been produced by PLAYGROUP (**Appendix E.2**) have not found a place in preschools or homes probably because of parents' and teachers' negative attitudes to reading in Kreol, and their lack of fluency in reading in Kreol (all Mauritians are made literate in European/Asian languages). Banda (2003) found the same tendency in South Africa, where English remains the preferred language for reading, despite the fact that reading and writing in English are often regarded as a burden and help is sought from family and friends. Similarly, research in Pakistan has indicated that the parental market for children's books in local languages is very small (Read, 1996: 92).

It seems to me that by simply assuming that teachers will read because it is beneficial, and by failing to acknowledge the complexity of the storybook reading act in the local context, the TTM show a lack of insight into the difficulties associated with story book reading in language(s) that children are not necessarily familiar with. The TTM hence fail to prepare teachers adequately for storybook reading in the local context. A

significant incident was when a Kreol storybook was offered to PSA teachers to read to the children: PSA teachers had remarked that they had not been trained to read in Kreol for the children, so they could not do it. I would thus tend agree with Harbinson & Hanushek (1992, cited in Oliveira, 1996: 86) and Read (1996: 99), who suggest that teachers in developing countries might lack the necessary skills to successfully implement a literature-based instructional approach. As is presently the case, Mauritian preschool teachers might lack the necessary skills to develop a literature-based literacy preschool programme. It, however, appears that these skills can be developed through teacher training (a two-day workshop is enough according to Elley, 1996) and through the provision of linguistically appropriate materials (in terms of level of language difficulty), as illustrated by the book flood projects for Grade 1 students in Singapore (Ng & Sullivan, 2001).

My own intervention in PSB indicates that having well-illustrated books, with a simple story-line, with simple and repetitive vocabulary, and with contextually relevant materials (for instance, photos of my daughter and a description of what she does in the morning before going to school – see **Photo Library** for a sample) have the power to draw PSB children's attention and include them in the reading process, even when the story was read in English. It was observed that PSB children requested certain stories to be re-read to them (for instance, *The Ugly Duckling*) and they participated in the reading session by saying "go away", a phrase that echoes through the story. Storybook reading in English in the local context is possible, but it requires relevant reading materials, accompanied by teacher training.

10.3.2.3 The dangers of uncritically drawing on the available Eurocentric literature

In its dealing with such topics as language development and storybook reading, it seems that the TTM have drawn heavily on the research done in American and European countries. Much of this research focuses on the experience of native speakers. Adopting such an approach to write the teacher training manuals has serious limitations, which have been discussed by non-American/European researchers.

By way of example, Diaz-Soto & Swadener (2002) caution us against the use of such terms as 'best practice' and 'developmentally appropriate practice', which are resonant terms in the literature on early childhood education, but which they say, may well represent Eurocentric and middle-class views and life experiences. For this reason, they alert us to the limitations of automatically and uncritically transferring terms, concepts and related practices cross-border. Similarly, Bloch (2000b: 194) discusses the complex transcontinental relationships brought about by colonialism, which have given rise to trends in education based on Western systems, consequently impacting seriously on African education systems in areas of early language and literacy learning. Referring more specifically to university level studies in Africa, Webb (2002: 213) argues that a superficial analysis of the linguistic training in African universities shows a seemingly uncritical acceptance of European and USA linguistics. Hence, the relevance for Africa of the theoretical frameworks, syllabus content, topics, and textbooks is not questioned in these curricula. In fact, Chatry-Komarek (1996: 39, cited in Bloch, 2002a: 16) advises potential textbook authors in developing countries to avoid the pitfall of basing their work on foreign models.

The literature on Asian contexts has produced similar critiques as those found in the African literature. Hsieh (2004) has argued that the concept 'developmentally appropriate practice' (which is also used in the Mauritian TTM) is inappropriate in Taiwan as it is in contradiction with the principles of Confucianism. Similarly, Morris (1992: 17, cited in Cheng, 2001) says that there is a tendency to import curriculum innovations in Hong Kong, and they often embody the opposite features of the local education system, which consequently defines and constrains the implementation of these innovations. Finally, in his critique of the Shared Book Approach in Singapore, Sriparthy (1998) has suggested that there are limitations to such imported pedagogical approaches, because they are based on a view of learning as developmental and involving negotiation and collaboration. According to Sriparthy, such a perspective is characteristic of upper class children in the West and might be inappropriate for Singapore, where learning is teacher-transmitted and exam-oriented. Tan (2005: 26) is more moderate in her critique and argues that shared book reading might be more appropriate for Singaporean children

coming from English-speaking backgrounds than for Singaporean children coming from Chinese-speaking backgrounds. In Singapore, and arguably the same can be said in Mauritius, “both reading and writing are seen as learning activities and not as personal meaning-making. The notion of learning as enjoyment is culturally foreign” (Sriparthy, 1998: 279). The notion of reading for fun would have to be nurtured in schools, though teachers’ concerted efforts, made possible by teacher training.

One could thus argue that this heavy reliance on Eurocentric theory, research and models can provide teachers with the theoretical tools to embrace teaching critically and effectively (Bloch, 2000b: 197). However, this approach fails to provide a bridge between theory and desired practices. We remember that local preschool teachers usually have at most secondary education, to the Cambridge School Certificate level. Their proficiency in English is limited. Indeed, most interviewed teachers found the language of the course materials difficult (Ch5.4) and PSA teachers’ performance in the Oral English test administered to them indicates their basic level of proficiency (Ch6.4.5). Local preschool teachers, from the pilot and main studies, also found it difficult, albeit irrelevant, to cover theory in the TT course. They claim that they need practical knowledge and experience to effectively teach in the preschool. In the context where the teaching and learning ethos in Mauritius is one where teachers and learners are used to working with set textbooks (Ch2.4.4), teachers are not been trained to behave as autonomous learners and practitioners. I would thus agree with Carless (1998: 355, who draws upon Fullan, 1991, and Karavas-Doukas, 1995), who argues that “it is desirable that [teachers] understand both the theoretical underpinnings and classroom applications of the innovation, but it is the latter that tends to prove most essential, especially in contexts where teachers are not well-trained and/or lack sound subject knowledge.”

In brief, I have argued that because of the tensions created by the colonial LiEP and which has influenced the preschool curricula (2003PPG and 1997PPG), the TTM too fail on two fronts. First, by not including significant and contextually relevant content and teaching practices on early literacy development (Jackson *et al.*, 2006), the training that preschool teachers undergo is arguably to a large extent fragmented, intellectually

superficial and disconnected from current issues and realities (Phillips, 2003, cited in Jackson *et al.*, 2006). Secondly, the TTM fails to provide this bridge between the curriculum and the classroom. As Johnson (1989: 3) says that, “If the materials writer provides the body of the curriculum, teacher training should provide the spirit.”

10.4 Some other factors determining preschoolers’ early literacy experiences at PSA

In the light of the literature review, which suggests that literacy is a social and cultural practice (Ch3.8), it is important to try and explore other intervening factors that might affect teachers’ pedagogical practices. In Ch10.4, I argue that in the context where there is lack of clarity and insecurity as to the language(s) that should underlie the preschool sector, there are external and internal forces that are determining in shaping teachers’ and parents’ practices.

10.4.1 External forces

My reading of PSA experiences leads me to argue that the three main external forces impacting on PSA teaching practices are: **the Std1 syllabus, parental pressure and the PSTF**. These are discussed separately below.

10.4.1.1 The unassailable power of the Std1 syllabus

Throughout the year 2005, PSA teachers repeatedly made reference to the Std1 syllabus and the pressure they felt the syllabus exerted on them. This perceived pressure arguably has had a washback effect on their teaching practices. For instance, it was observed that while PSA teachers repeatedly taught similar Maths and EVS concepts, using the scaffolding strategy, they only exposed the children to the more general English vocabulary in relation to the daily theme (Ch6.4.3). T1 said that she taught shapes and colours because these concepts are in the Std1 textbook, and she has to prepare the children for this “shock” (field notes: 17 February 2005). The better results of PSA children on the Maths and EVS vocabulary (Ch9.5.2, Table 25), when compared to the more general English vocabulary, shows that the pupils actually learn the words they are diligently taught over the year. This disparity in teaching seems to be related to

incoherence between the English, and Maths and EVS Std1 textbooks, identified and discussed in Ch2.4.5.

Another example of the washback effect of Std1 is the teaching of the alphabet. Although the PSTF is against the direct teaching of the alphabet (Ch7.4.3), PSA teachers do engage in some alphabet teaching. This again can be related to the discrepancy between the English Std1 textbook (introduces children to graphemes) and the Maths and EVS Std1 textbooks (record complex written instructions in English) (Ch2.4.5), as well as the discrepancy between the English and French textbooks⁶⁹ (Auleear Owodally, 2007).

The direct teaching of the alphabet can also be related to teachers' beliefs. Wright (2001: 62) writes that:

...rather than failing to understand, the teachers may instead be choosing to interpret the L2 curriculum in their own ways, and that these choices are based on their own concerns about what is best for the students, what is possible given the constraints of their material circumstances, their beliefs about the students and their families, and in some cases, awareness of their own capabilities and limitations as teachers.

It appears that PSA teachers' decisions and pedagogical practices are, to some extent, influenced by what they believe it is their duty to teach to the preschoolers who are about to enter Std1. Since the context is not conducive to their using the whole language approach to early literacy instruction, and since the teacher training course has not helped teachers use the whole language approach in the classroom, PSA teachers tend to resort to the skills-based approach to literacy instruction and teach individual letters to PSA children. However, the counter pressure from the PSTF, limits the regularity of this practice. It is possible that the washback effect of the Std1 curriculum is exacerbated by the fact that PSA teachers have limited proficiency in English. Cheah (1998) argues that teachers' own linguistic insecurity can amplify the washback effect of exams and higher

⁶⁹ In a comparative analysis of the Std1 French and English textbooks, Auleear Owodally (2007) argues that while the French textbooks introduces Std1 learners to whole texts in French, thus assuming that children have certain oral language and decoding skills; the English textbook introduces learners to individual letters, thus assuming that children have no decoding skills.

levels of education. Since PSA teachers have indicated limited proficiency in English, this might explain why they react to the pressures of the Std1 syllabus.

As a final comment, I think it is important to recognise the extent to which PSA/PSB teachers' are concerned with preparing the children for Std1. This can be seen in the way they train the children in their eating and seating habits in view of the culture of Std1. PSA/PSB teachers said that they have to "discipline" the children to face the shock of Std1, where the children have to work regularly and the whole day from 9 am to 3.20 pm, and where children have to eat on their own because the primary school teachers will not have the time to feed 40 children during the short break time. Preschool teachers' behaviour, their general behaviour as well as their language and literacy behaviours, is affected by the intricate link they make between life in the preschool and life in Std1.

10.4.1.2 Parental pressure

While PSA teachers did not report parental pressure with respect to the teaching of oral English at preschool level, they did report that parents exert direct pressure on them to teach their children their 'abc's'. T1 talks about parents who put pressure on teachers to teach their children the alphabet, sometimes as early as when they are 3. She says that parents are very academically geared. Hence, although the curriculum does not allow them to teach the alphabet, they feel that they have to do some of it. According to T1, parents in Mauritius will never accept to have the system changed completely, thus we will never be like European countries. T1 thinks that there must be a mixture of direct and indirect instruction, so as to satisfy the system as well as the parents (field notes - 17 February 2005).

This pressure to teach the children the alphabet is further supported by (1) parents' expectation that their children are taught the alphabet in preschool, and (2) parents' own claim to engage in the direct teaching of the alphabet to their children at home.

10.4.1.3 The PSTF

Teachers are also very conscious of the pressures exerted by the PSTF, through its Regional Director and TES. This is partly confirmed by the Regional Director (Zone 4, p.c.), who is totally against the rote teaching of the alphabet at preschool level, suggesting that preschool teachers should use opportunities like children's names, and words written on boxes to introduce children to the alphabet. According to PSA/PSB teachers, the PSTF is totally opposed to a skills-based approach to literacy, through the teaching of the letters and letter names in the preschool (Ch7.4.3). The TES, who makes surprise visits to the school and writes comments in the official book, acts as additional pressure because these visits are always perceived as having a supervisory role.

10.4.2 Internal forces

The data in Ch6, 7 and 8 indicate that there are a number of striking similarities between the school and the home. These similarities, which provide evidence that there are internal forces driving teaching practices, have to be explored and explained. Some of these similarities are:

- PSA teachers, 80% (n=15) of the teachers in the pilot study and 75% of the interviewed mothers were against a shift to Kreol as LoL and MoI, hence preferring to retain English as LoL and MoI;
- Most teachers and parents acknowledge the importance of English in the preschool (Ch8.3.5), which is perceived as a route to educational and professional success;
- Both teachers and parents expose children to discrete English lexical items, while emphasising the mathematical and EVS vocabulary over the more general English vocabulary;
- The vast majority of mothers (all but 2) believe that their children should be taught the alphabet at preschool (Ch8.3.5), and two of the three PSA teachers were in favour of the direct teaching of the alphabet - while T1 said that she found no harm in teaching the children the alphabet letters, T2 mentioned using this approach with her two children when they were younger. Consequently, both teachers and mothers teach the alphabet, although teachers

do so on an *ad hoc* basis despite the pressure of the PSTF not to do so (Ch7.3.3, 7.4.3);

- Teachers and parents engage in little, if any, storybook reading (Ch7.4.4 & 8.4.2). Although teachers acknowledge the importance of reading by including reading in the weekly lesson plans, and although parents expect teachers to read to their children, neither teachers nor parents practise regular storybook reading with the children.

This resemblance between teacher and parent beliefs and practices indicates that the local culture has its specificities, which cannot and should not be downplayed or underestimated. In fact, O’Gorman *et al.* (2004) argue that teachers’ and parents’ **views** about young children’s education are entrenched in the sociocultural context. Similarly, Brandt & Clinton (2002, cited in Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 79) say that teachers’ and parents’ **practices** are embedded in the sociocultural context, with the social context organising literacy as opposed to literacy organising the social context. The rest of this sub-section considers the elements of the sociocultural context that potentially mould parents’ and teachers’ beliefs and (observed) practices.

10.4.2.1 Teachers’/Parents’ socio-cultural background

The similarities noted between parents and teachers can be explained by the fact that both come from a similar socio-economic background. An analysis of PSA teachers’ and PSA/PSB parents’ background shows a number of commonalities:

- They speak the same language at home, Kreol;
- Given their salary (pre-school teachers are poorly paid in Mauritius and earn approximately Rs6000 monthly, while most parents have blue collar jobs), they can be said to belong to the lower middle-class;
- They have children: T1 has three young adults, T2 has two children, T3 has one young adult;
- They are involved in active family lives. Both T1 and T2 live very near to their in-laws and are responsible for their well-being. T1’s parents-in-law live on the ground floor of her house. They are old and ailing. She often cooks

for them and does chores for them. T2's father-in-law passed away in 2005. I attended the funeral and witnessed the closeness of family relations, and was told of the regular religious rituals following the cremation. T2 became *de facto* responsible for her mother-in-law after that. T3 lives in a nuclear family and was involved in extending her house to prepare for her son's coming wedding. Teachers regularly talked about the family weddings and religious functions they prepared and/or attended. The same kind of family tie was found among interviewed mothers. When I called mothers for the post-observation interviews, it was often the case that I met with in-laws, who then called the mothers to take the call. In one case, a mother-in-law insisted that she could answer my questions, but mid-way through the interview, she said I might want to call her daughter-in-law. All this suggests that the extended family culture, where the daughter-in-law is often responsible for the well-being of the family at large, takes the time and energy of mothers and puts some pressure on them.

It thus seems to me that parents and teachers have similar life styles, similar pre-occupations, which are social and family encounters taking a lot of their time after school hours and during the week-ends. Such a background probably impacts on the value that teachers and parents assign to education. For them, hard work and education open up possibilities for professional and social mobility. For this reason, early in the children's educational journey, they try to teach their children the skills they think the children need to succeed at the next level of education. Furthermore, their social and economic background is not always conducive to developing a reading culture, nor does it allow them to spend too much on books.

10.4.2.2 Teachers'/Parents' learning experience

It seems to me that the similarities between parent and teacher practices can be explained by the fact that they have had similar learning experiences as children. PSA teachers' and PSA/PSB parents' age indicate that they went to school in the 70s and 80s. A small incursion into the local history can enlighten us on their personal learning experience.

Many parents and teachers might have had access to free education (1977 was the beginning of free secondary education); however the 70's and 80's were an economically difficult time for an island still depending largely on its agriculture. The added costs of education (school materials and equipment) were thus a constraint on many people at the time.

In terms of language teaching, these were the days of behaviorism, with a focus on rote repetition and memorisation, the use of grammar-translation and audiolingualism, and the absence of a communicative approach to language teaching. PSA teachers' use of code-switching technique, with the direct teaching of discrete vocabulary items through their French/Kreol equivalent/translation, reminds me of the grammar-translation method, popular until the 1940s and still used in some parts of the world to date (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

These years were also marked by a skills-based approach to literacy instruction. The set readers at the time were *Rémi et Marie* for French (syllabic approach) and *Robin and Rita* for English ('look and say' method). Coming from such a culture of literacy learning, PSA teachers tend to believe in the value of a skills-based approach to literacy instruction (as do the parents) and seem to be frustrated by the changing position of the PSTF. Early in their career, preschool teachers were encouraged to do graphics exercises with children as they were told it would develop the children's fine motor-skill and be a precursor to later writing. At the turn of the century, they were told not to do these exercises as they were not supposed to teach children to write down individual letters, instead they were told to encourage children to write letters and words using 'Functional Literacy' activities (as described in Ch7.3.3). In the context of the ever-changing position of the PSTF, PSA teachers ask the children to 'decorate' the border of their drawing paper with graphics as a pre-writing activity.

In sum, education in the 80s (as from preschool level) was characterised by a "rat race" (2000MoE Report) training of children for exams, rather than preparing them for further education, and a focus on rote learning and discrete skills learning. This rate race culminated, in the late 70s and early 80s, in parents sending their children to preschool to

do the Std1 syllabus, so that the children would go directly into Std2 and thus gain a year in education. This extra year was then reserved for another chance at sitting for the competitive CPE exams, which provided access to a select few good secondary schools. It is this experience of pre- and primary schooling that our subjects (teachers and parents) share and this possibly impacts on their conception of what is important in their children's preschool education, and their pedagogic practices. They arguably reproduce the schooled type of language and literacy activities that they were exposed to as children.

This discussion of the impact of local culture on teachers' classroom practices aligns itself with research done elsewhere. Wortham (2002: 184) says that teachers "are not only bombarded with current trends and fads in education, they also have been influenced by their own experiences." Hence, teachers often teach the way in which they were taught, and not so much in which they were trained to teach. Moreover, Chatry-Komarek (2003: 8) says that when teachers have no access to specialised materials about reading and writing, when they have few opportunities to discuss pedagogical choices, they use dogmatic recipes carried over from colonial times and feel they have to teach following the traditional approaches (the same may apply to parents, who have no training at all). Referring to secondary school teachers of English in Japan, Sato & Kleinsasser (2004: 802) found they seemed to rely on their own L2 learning and teaching experience when teaching. Extending what Dunn & Dasananda (1995), Ojala (2000) and Wise (2002) say about the fact that cultural background and ideology have a strong influence on what parents (and teachers) expect from the early childhood programme, this study has argued that cultural background and ideology also strongly influence parents' and teachers' practices in homes and preschools.

10.4.2.3 Teachers'/Parents' reading experiences

Referring to children having reading difficulties, Rogers (2003, cited in Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 10) says that the dissimilarity between home and school literacies leads to problems in literacy teaching. Mauritius does **not** fall into this category, where there are striking differences between home and school literacies. On the contrary, there are many

similarities between home and school literacies, which can be explained by the fact that parents' and teachers' own early experience with print was probably mostly school based, leading to the perception that reading is synonymous with education, that reading is an academic exercise. Since the same kind of perception has been reported in the South African context (Abel, 2003: 196; Maseko & Thunbadoo, 2003: 40), it is possible to argue that this perception is associated with colonialism. In colonies, few people had access to education and learning to read and write in the colonial languages was largely restricted to those who had access to school. This was true in the case of Mauritius, where education became free only in 1977. While most teachers and parents might have benefited from free education, it was still a fairly new privilege that came with its challenges and difficulties: they had to buy books and compete to get access to the few secondary government schools. That might explain why they associate reading and writing to schools.

The similarity between home and school literacy can also be explained by the poor local reading culture. It is a fact that it is only recently that storybooks are easily available in bookshops and libraries being made accessible to people in Mauritius. However, they are expensive and still, within the reach of a select few. Moreover, few people read – Abel (2003: 136) describes the South African context in terms of “no one reads, neither teachers, nor trainers, nor learners, nor parents”, which is also somewhat true for teachers and parents interviewed for this study. In fact, it is possible that parents and teachers lead busy and satisfying lives with little mediation from print (Purcell-Gates, 1996).

Finally, it has been observed that through their religious education, parents (and teachers) are taught to read and say prayers, without necessarily understanding what they are saying (Ch8.4.2). This might have contributed to reinforcing the culture of rote learning and memorisation (to the detriment of reading for comprehension) already experienced in their school. Marsh (2006: 160, citing Gregory and Williams, 2003; Knobel & Lankshear, 2003) has shown that the curricula in many schools do not recognise the children's out-of-school literacy practices, and that they hide vernacular literacies (citing Barton, 1998: 4). Taking up this approach where the school literacy borrows from or

builds upon the home literacy practices would be problematic in Mauritius, because the population of Mauritius consists of various religious groups, these different groups have their own (distinct) religious literacy practices. However, the school as an institution officially remains a secular institution in Mauritius. In the local context, therefore, it would seem that building bridges between the home literacy practices and school literacy practices might require serious attention to sensitive issues.

Because the preschool and the home are embedded in the wider social context, an inter-relationship between them is inevitable, with one reinforcing the other, leading to the perpetuation of certain practices. Since teachers and parents alike, do not come from a 'reading' culture or a 'reading for pleasure' culture, it would be hard to expect them to transmit that culture to their students/children. Moreover, it seems difficult either to influence teachers and parents in their daily practices or to expect teachers and parents to adopt a reading culture overnight, if they lead satisfying lives with little mediation from print (Purcell-Gates, 1996). Unless and until measures are taken to break this cycle of 'schooled literacies', the literacy practices shared by teachers and parents will probably carry on, with the one reinforcing the other, and this does not seem to be suitable in the local context which is slowly diversifying itself and moving towards a services-based economy. Indeed, Mauritius no longer benefits from preferential sugar prices, or preferential trade agreements with European countries for its textile industry. It is, therefore, competing with other powers like China and India where labour is cheap. The tourist industry is also fragile because of the smallness of the country and the fact that there are a limited number of beaches. The challenge for Mauritius is to develop a solid services base, which is largely print mediated and essentially English based.

10.5 Children's learning experiences: Ready for Std1?

In the next sub-section, I focus on the attained curriculum, in order to address:

RQ2: What are the outcomes of these early literacy experiences?

RQ3: How far do these experiences prepare them to use English as main language of literacy and main written medium of instruction in Std 1?

10.5.1 The relationship between 'sensitivity to print' and 'interest in print'

Test 1 results (Task 1A, B, C) for PSA/PSB children reveal that early in their preschool years, they show awareness to the print materials that are in the local environment. Moreover, the children's understanding of the conventions of print also showed progress over the year. This sensitivity to the printed word, and the conventions associated with it, can be understood in the context where Mauritius is a developing country and print is visible everywhere. The children's immersion in this print world cannot but sharpen their awareness of the presence of print and some of the conventions associated with print. The question, however, is whether this acute awareness of environmental print is indicative of an early interest in print that could then lead to later analytic orientation, as suggested by Dickinson & DeTemple (1998).

The data collected from PSA children indicate that despite children's awareness of print, they showed limited interest in print-related activities. The pre-test and post-test results of PSA children on Task 1D, in fact, showed no significant progress in interest in print-related activities over the final preschool year (Ch9.5.2). Although this can be explained by the local context, (1) where there is no 'reading for pleasure' culture, (2) where children are socialised into having a very formal, didactic, bookish, institutional type of relationship with books, and (3) where learning is emphasised instead of, albeit to the detriment of, the other functions of reading, it is nevertheless the case that PSA children showed little interest in print-related materials. This can be seen as problematical because:

- The preschoolers will move on to Std1, which is heavily print-oriented (the bulky textbooks);
- The whole education system is also heavily print-oriented with the textbook being the centre of teaching and learning experiences;
- Potentially, the main provider of English input for Mauritian learners is print-materials, given that English is not extensively used in society or in the media. Developing interest in print-related materials is important in such English-poor environments as Mauritius, as it is one way of developing proficiency in English, the basis of educational development in Mauritius. The book flood experiments (Ch3.6.2) are an example of this.

It seems to me that this lack of interest in print-materials is a cause for concern because PSB children, who were involved in the OEIP containing a strong book-reading component, showed more interest in literacy-related activities on the post-test. Nevertheless, when compared with PSA children (Ch9.4.3), the improvement was of medium effect ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.4$). The comparison between PSA and PSB children indicates that a 15-minute every-alternate-day OEIP session is not enough to impact robustly on the children's interest in literacy-related activities. The local environment and culture have a more forceful effect on children's interest than the OEIP had. **To me, these findings are a source of worry and indicate the need for some form of intervention.**

10.5.2 Familiarity with the alphabet

Over their final preschool year, most PSA and PSB children demonstrated the ability to rote learn and repeat the first ten letters of the alphabet and to write their names. This shows that PSA children have memorised the letters of the alphabet and they have memorised the symbolic written representation of their names through repeated copying (Ch7.3.2). However, they have shown less success in recognising the alphabet letters, and even less success in writing them down (Ch9.5.3, Table 28). Taken together, these results indicate a basic knowledge of one of the foundations of reading and writing.

Although this basic knowledge is unproblematic in relation to the 2003PPG, which emphasises a whole language approach, it is more problematical in relation to the research base on the value of alphabet knowledge as a route to literacy development. It is true to say that there is considerable debate over the value of teaching letter names to preschoolers in an era of meaningful and contextualised teaching (evidence cited in Share, 2004: 214). However, it cannot be ignored that knowing the letter names enhances children's early literacy development (refer to Ch3.4). In the context where PSA/PSB children will be required to start recognizing whole words and phrases in the Std1 Maths and EVS textbooks to carry out activities, it seems to me that the tension between the official documents (no alphabet teaching) and teachers' and parents' beliefs (the importance of teaching the alphabet) might be coming in the way of developing that one aspect of the children's emergent literacy development, which is alphabet knowledge. **The test results on letter naming indicate that PSA are not fully ready to meet the challenges of the Std1 textbooks.**

10.5.3 The oral foundation to literacy development

Although PSA children have made significant progress in oral English over their final preschool year (from 23.7% on the pre-test to 50% on the post-test: Ch9.4.2, Table 25), the qualitative analysis of their results has indicated that this progress is characterised by familiarity with the terms they will come across in the Std1 Maths and EVS textbooks and **not** a more general progress in oral English. It seems that the teachers' and parents' concern for the transition to Std1 leads them to focus on a preparation for Std1: this limits itself largely to making children familiar with the vocabulary that they will come across in the first few weeks of the Maths and EVS Std1 class. In other words, parents and teachers alike do the oral English version of some of the Std1 Maths and EVS syllabus in the last year of preschool. Hence, it appears that (1) in relation to the claim made in the TTM claim that oral language is the foundation of literacy, and (2) in relation to the literature reviewed (Ch3.5.2) on the role of SL/FL oral proficiency as a stepping stone into enhanced reading development, the oral English experience in PSA is of a very restricted kind. Instead of preparing children orally in the FL to develop literacy skills in

that FL, the PSA experience restricts itself to a narrow preparation of the children to confront the Maths and EVS Std1 syllabus.

By being so restrictive, I would argue that the whole system fails to effectively prepare children to read and write in English, and to use English as a MoI. For PSA children, learning to read in English in Std1 might remain a challenge, because as well as having to memorise the written representation/symbols for the words they come across in the context where their alphabet knowledge is not well developed, they also have to learn the new words and syntax associated with that new code. The crutches that oral English proficiency could have provided them with are apparently not available to support them as they face, or transit into, the symbolical world of literacy in a language they are hardly proficient in. This is not uncommon in developing countries where English becomes the MoI. Talking of the South African experience, Bloch (2002b: 68) describes and critiques a similar kind of situation, where children are expected to swap concentration on learning the relationship between familiar oral sounds and words with their printed form, for new and strange words with their written form. Referring to South African mid-primary schooling, Webb (2002) and Webb (2004, citing McDonald, 1990, Le Roux & Schollar, 1996) argue that South African children's proficiency in English is below required levels at the moment English becomes the MoI. Similarly, Kraft (1994: 2, cited in Lipson & Wixson, 2004: 3) points out that under the Ghanaian language policy, children do not reach the cognitive threshold necessary for successful transfer to English in the fourth year of primary education. While in the Seychelles, where Seychelles Creole is the LoL and MoI until Std3, teachers have said that the transition to English as MoI in Std4 meant doing the whole Maths syllabus all over again in English.

Interestingly and in parallel, we find that in English-speaking countries like the USA. For instance, low income students have similar types of difficulties, associated with the transitional period, characterised by a shift from learning to read to learning to use reading as a tool for learning so much so that it has been named the 'grade 4 slump' (Cummins, 2003). American language learners also face difficulties. In this context, Crawford, A. (2003: 176) says that "we often postpone or even eliminate instruction for

English language learners [...] in the very areas of the curriculum where new vocabulary words will be offered in the most highly contextualised ways: science, social studies, art, music, health.”

Set within the larger international research context, this study points towards the determining role of education in taking students to the required English proficiency level for them to effectively utilize English as LoL and MoI, whenever this happens in individual countries, even if this is at preschool level. Different educational models in different countries will require different levels of English proficiency to be determined *in situ*. In the case of countries that have English as LoL and MoI as from the first year of primary education, the above analysis leads us to argue for a preparation in pre-primary education for the shift to English as LoL and MoI in the first year of primary education. This is in line with what Le Roux (1999) suggests: “At very last, where establishing MTE is difficult, programmes with a clear transition or bridging phase to the foreign language of tuition must be established either during the first year of primary, or before formal education is begun.” This preparation for a smooth transition to English as LoL and MoI appears to be possible in the local context: the OEIP, despite its limitations,⁷⁰ suggests that a broader oral English base can be obtained with careful time planning, with specific objectives for the introduction of English at preschool level and appropriate teaching methodologies for young learners of English. This would reflect the international context where “researchers of all ideological persuasions are converging on the conclusion that the nature and quality of instruction provided to English language learners are at least as important as the language of instruction” (Brisk, 1998; Christian & Genesee, 2001, cited in Slavin & Cheung, 2003).

10.5.4 Collateral learning experiences

The data analysed in Ch7, 8 and 9, suggest that alongside the taught curriculum in PSA, ran a parallel hidden curriculum possibly shaping PSA learners’ collateral learning

⁷⁰ The limitation of my study is that it does not test the predictive value of the OEIP. An essential question that needs to be addressed in further research is whether an OEIP at preschool level in Mauritius will enhance the literacy development of Std1 children.

experiences. Cortazzi & Jin (1996: 169) say that “any particular culture of learning will have its roots in the educational and more broadly, cultural traditions of the community or society in which it is located. Children are socialised into a culture of learning in their preschool years, at home, and more particularly in kindergarten and early years at school.” The practices associated with the exposure to oral English and literacy indicate that PSA children are socialised into particular ways of conceiving English and literacy in the local context. Some examples of this “culture of learning” are:

- English words were taught mainly through repetition, code-switching and translation: this practice does not put across the communicative value of English;
- The teaching of English vocabulary was largely teaching what teachers thought was ‘needed’ for Std1, rather than developing broader oral English language skills;
- There was a near-absence of storybook reading in the preschool, and this was also observed in the homes;
- The type(s) of literacy taught in the preschool (and the home) was the formal/didactic type(s) of literacies, rather than the more functional and enjoyable types of literacies: the initiation to literacy does not put across the functions and uses of print outside the narrow confines of the classroom;
- There also appeared to be a lack of environmental (parental and teacher) interest in reading (Swalander & Taube, 2007: 3).

In sum, PSA teachers unconsciously fail to demonstrate to children the value of learning English and the value of engaging in literacy in their day-to-day lives. What is implicitly emphasised in PSA teachers’ teaching practices is that children are part of the school system and should be made ready to learn. Conversely, the above practices pass on to children a genuine pleasure in repetition and reproduction instead of educating children (and making them interested) in making and creating new meanings through English and literacy. While these preschool and home practices might be preparing the children for traditional school practices (inseparable from disciplinary practices of the school), these practices undervalue the capacity that English and literacy have to make pleasurable meaning (Prinsloo & Stein, 2004).

Hence, I would argue that the preschool and home environments train learners for school, but neglects to motivate them to engage in literacy so as to become lifelong learners (Gee, 1996; Baker & Wigfield, 1999: 468), and this from their most tender age. Compared with teachers (and parents) in developed countries who concentrate on developing positive reading habits and attitudes (Elley, 1996: 50; Lundberg & Linnakyla, 1992, cited in Greaney, 1996: 21), teachers and parents in PSA/PSB tend to emphasise the development of discrete decoding skills in children's EL experiences (not untypical of the developing world). Johnston & Costello (2005) describe literacy learning as being more than developing strategies for working with print: it is also a complex local, personal, and social endeavour, within which becoming literate involves developing identities, relationships, dispositions and values (Brandt, 2001; Collins & Blot, 2003). The above discussion suggests the experiences that PSA children are immersed into, at the preschool and in the home, are "clues to our culture, values, belief systems and even what carries currency in our local worlds, hence they admit that children are socialised in particular ways of conceiving literacy depending on the local environment" (Pahl & Roswell, 2005: 44). Hence, I would argue that the preschool and the home contexts, which are part of a larger context, do not encourage children to develop an intimate relationship with English as a language of communication and with literacy. On the contrary, they pass on English as a dry subject, to be learnt throughout the school system. This is extremely problematic in a context where children will have to pursue the rest of their educational career in English.

10.6 Summary of data interpretation

The above discussion supports Weigel *et al.* (2006), who suggest that there is an ongoing relationship between parental (and teacher) reading beliefs, their literacy habits and their language and literacy activities in the home (and preschool), which ultimately impact on children's EL development. This chapter has critiqued the 2003PPG, TTM, teacher and parent views and practices in the local Mauritian context:

- The effects of the colonial LiEP are still visible in the shaping of the curriculum, the teacher training course, and classroom teaching practices;

- There is a disparity between the curriculum and teacher training, and classroom practice, because the one contains a Eurocentric rhetoric and the other refers to everyday Mauritian life;
- While the few guidelines for literacy learning in the curriculum suggest and offer opportunities (which are theoretically and empirically driven) for progress, they are:
 - uncritical of the Euro-American models,
 - not adapted and not necessarily adaptable in any case, to the local context,
 - unclear and conflict with teachers' common-sense understandings of early literacy teaching (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999: 464);
- Making the teacher responsible for the limitations of their literacy practices and teaching approaches would be unfair in a context where (1) the teacher training course has a number of shortcomings, and (2) teachers' pedagogical decisions are constrained by the context of which they form an integral part;
- PSA teachers' practices are shaped by external pressures and internal forces, which have to be understood in the specific local context;
- Through their practices related to teaching English and literacy, parents and teachers are socialising their children into very particular ways of relating to English and literacy. Furthermore, they are preparing children for Std1 in very narrow and limited ways, failing to develop the skills, which will optimise literacy development such as interest in literacy, the alphabetic principle, and a solid oral English base.

Although the preschool experiences initiate children into English and literacy, there is a sense that children are not adequately prepared to meet the language and literacy challenges of the Std1 syllabus and of education in general.

CHAPTER 11

Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter starts by summing the main conclusions flowing from this research, in relation to the main **RQs** articulated in Ch1.8. I then critically discuss the research methodology adopted for this thesis, before making a number of recommendations to the Ministry of Education. Finally, I state the contribution that this research makes to knowledge and education, before making recommendations for further research.

11.1 Summary of conclusions to the study

In response to **RQ1-3**, the conclusions are summed up below:

RQ1: What factors account for preschoolers' early literacy experiences?

1) The social and cultural context

- Some of the characteristics of the local context are:
 - a mismatch between the home and school language,
 - the perception that English should remain the LoL and MoL,
 - the behavioristic learning experience that teachers and parents have inherited,
 - a poor reading culture, possibly explained by the disparity between the language of daily communication and language of literacy,
 - religious reading practices that emphasise rote learning and memorisation
 - an exams-oriented education system.

2) The language policy

- The education system operates in the shadow of a colonial LiEP;
- English is the *de facto* language of literacy and medium of instruction;
- This impacts on the preschool curriculum.

3) Preschool practices

- Uncomfortably juggling between the importance of the home language and the eventual school language, the preschool curriculum remains vague as to the objectives for oral English and pre-reading and pre-writing;
- Consequently, the teacher training programme, which is over-dependent on a Eurocentric literature, fails to provide contextually relevant guidance to teachers on how to teach oral English and pre-reading/writing to child foreign language learners;
- This has an impact on preschool teachers, who use strategies they remember from their own learning experiences to prepare children for the Maths and EVS Std1 textbooks.

4) Home practices

- In their exposing their children to oral English/pre-reading-writing, parents resemble teachers. This shows the extent to which teachers'/parents' practices are firmly embedded in the local culture.

RQ2: What are the outcomes of these early literacy experiences?**1) Familiarity with print/the alphabet**

- Although children are aware that print carries meaning, and are able to write their names, they cannot yet recognise, and still less write, the letters of the alphabet.

2) Interest in print-related materials:

- There is little progress in children's interest in print over the final preschool year.

3) Proficiency in oral English

- It is limited to knowing the Maths (especially rote counting and the number concept) and EVS vocabulary that appears at the beginning of the Std1 textbook;
- The children know too little English to be able to use that knowledge as a stepping stone to develop English as a language of literacy and English as medium of instruction;
- The quasi-experimental design in PSB indicated that an intervention programme could significantly broaden the oral English language base.

4) Collateral learning experiences

- PSA children are socialised into:
 - developing a narrow-base learning experience: they are narrowly trained to learn for the next level,
 - viewing English as an arid school subject, instead of a dynamic language of communication,
 - building up a dry relationship with books and reading, even when reading for pleasure.

RQ3: How far do these experiences prepare them to use English as main language of literacy and main written medium of instruction in Std 1?

This thesis has argued that PSA children are not adequately prepared to make a smooth transition to Std1, where English is the language of literacy and (written) medium of instruction prepared to meet the oral English language and literacy challenges of Std1. Although they have started developing the basics of literacy (they are aware that print carries meaning and they have limited knowledge of the alphabet), and although they have some familiarity with English that might facilitate their transition to Std1 Maths/EVS,

- they are not familiar enough with the alphabet to start reading/writing in English for the Std1 subjects: English, Maths and EVS;
- their interest in print materials seems not well enough developed to deal with the print-based and print-mediated education system awaiting them,
- their limited knowledge of English might impede optimal literacy/reading development in English, the language which forms the very foundation of the present Mauritian education system.

This thesis argues that an intervention programme can provide a broader oral English language base, upon which children can build their reading skills in English.

11.2 A critical consideration of the research methodology adopted for this study

1) Given the exploratory nature of this thesis, and having experienced the limitations of the cross-sectional research design of the pilot study, the ethnographic approach to the case study method was chosen to drive this thesis. Although the case study has provided in-depth insights into understanding, explaining and interpreting practices related to the exposure to English and literacy, it has nevertheless focused on **one** group of preschool children in **one** setting. Moreover, only on schools visited in Zone 4 were considered. The Island of Mauritius is divided into 4 zones:

- Zone 1: Port-Louis/North: 350 preschools;
- Zone 2: Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill: 260 preschools;
- Zone 3: Curepipe/South: 247 preschools;
- Zone 4: Quatre-Bornes/Vacoas-Phoenix/West: 182 preschools.

However, as I compare the preschools visited during the pilot study with PSA (similarities which have been pointed out throughout this thesis), I feel that the teachers and children at PSA might be representative of preschool teachers and lower middle class children in Mauritius. For further research, data using a more quantitative approach would help enlighten researchers and Ministry officials on the generalisation of the findings herein discussed, and on similarities/distinctions that can potentially exist between (1) preschool in urban/rural areas, (2) Government and private preschools, (3) 'expensive' and 'cheap' private preschools, (4) trained and

untrained preschool teachers, and (5) teachers with varying educational levels. In the light of the above limitations to the present study, the recommendations made to the Ministry of Education, Mauritius, are still preliminary in nature. They call for more research in the area investigated in this thesis.

- 2) Since this research aimed to quantify, as scientifically and objectively as possible, the children's learning experience over their final preschool year, a test had to be designed. Although this test (Ch9) successfully measured the children's progress in oral English and literacy over the year, the predictive value of the test is unknown. The children participating in this study (PSA and PSB) went to different Std1 classrooms in their respective Government primary schools in 2006. The long-term outcome(s) of their preschool experiences is/are not known at the time when this thesis is being written.
- 3) I recognise and endorse the importance of the mother tongue in pre-primary and primary education: I have regularly referred to Kreol throughout the study and I have constantly used Kreol with the test subjects and the teachers. However, my aim has been to focus on EL experiences in a foreign language context. This, in no way, diminishes the importance assigned to the MT in the education system. Furthermore, I admit that French is also a socially important language in Mauritius. However, I have mentioned, but not focused on French, since this language poses yet another set of problems and questions in the local context.
- 4) I have collected information on parents' language and literacy practices at home from directed-phone-interviews. It is true that going into homes to actually observe the language and literacy practices might have been more true to the spirit of ethnography, but it is clear that my research is interested in and focuses on the preschool classroom. This research sees the preschool classroom as the vector of change in Mauritius (Ch3.10).
- 5) Due to the time constraints imposed by a PhD thesis, only the final year of pre-primary schooling was considered. It is likely that many of the children observed would already have had a year of pre-primary schooling by the time they get to their final year of pre-primary education. The pre-test, carried out in January 2005 (the

beginning of the children's year of preschool education) aimed to capture the children's earlier oral English language and literacy experiences, should they have taken place before the final preschool year.

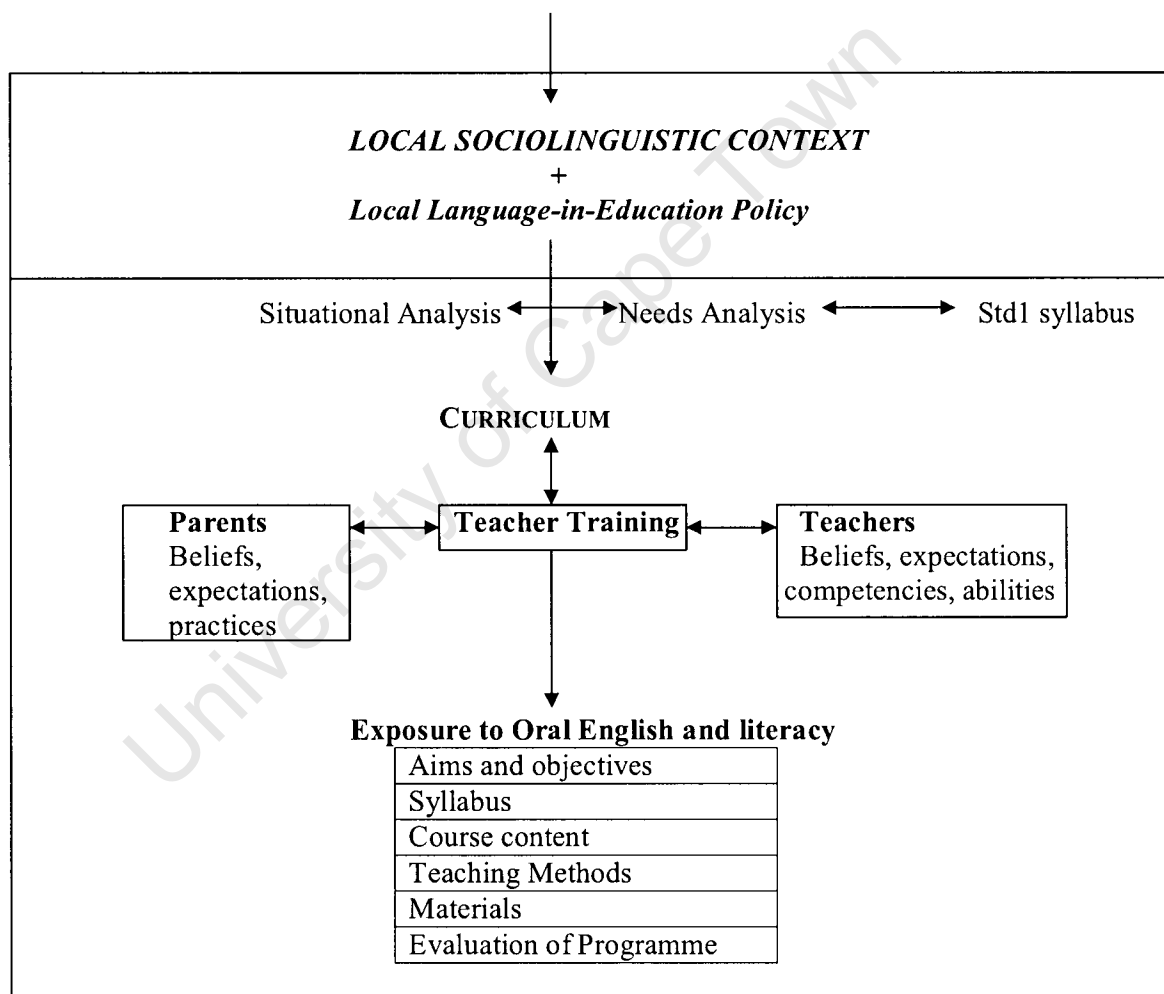
11.3 Recommendations to the Ministry of Education

In this sub-section, I make a number of recommendations to the local Ministry of Education. These recommendations are made in view of:

- my critical reading of the literature on literacy development and literacy instruction, which leads me to argue for an inclusive literacy instructional approach where top-down approaches are used to make reading a meaning-making endeavour and bottom-up approaches are used to help learners decode as an important step in reading development. As I make recommendations, I draw upon the two approaches to literacy instruction, which I see in as supplementing each other, rather than in competition with each other;
- my enriched understanding of the teaching practices and learning experiences in PSA,
- my own experience in PSB,
- the synthesis of findings arrived at in Ch10.2, and the summing up of the conclusions in Ch11.1,
- the methodological approach which limits generalisation of findings (Ch11.2),

These recommendations are also based on my belief that children have to be prepared for school (Ch1.4) and that it is easier and more ethical for authorities to intervene at the level of the education system, than it is to intervene at the family level.

The recommendations might possibly be relevant to preschool contexts similar to the preschool contexts investigated in our Mauritian research. I will use the figure below to guide my recommendations.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: THE RACE FOR ENGLISH
**RESEARCH ON EMERGENT LITERACY
(IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXTS)**


11.3.1 Language policy

- **It is crucial to formulate a transparent LiEP that applies to the preschool and lower primary school sectors, and that takes into account both the local and international contexts**

Despite the benefits of MT education, a number of reasons have been mentioned in Ch2.4.2 to argue that a change of LiEP to include Kreol as LoL and MoI in Mauritius seems a remote possibility for the time being. The data collected for this thesis also indicate that parents and teachers are against any change in language policy (Ch8.3.5), since they perceive English to be the passport to social mobility (findings that support Rajah-Carrim's, 2007, view). In such a context, it seems important that the colonial LiEP, be revisited and reformulated, so that the role of English in the Mauritian educational arena be defined in clear terms. This will help clarify the targets for English language learning and language teaching. Stroud (2001) and Webb (2002) cite Bamgbose (1991) to suggest that problems in policy making can be avoided if policy texts are worded more explicitly, to clearly state what language(s) should be taught, and which agencies and institutions should be responsible for policy implementation. Like Mahadeo (2006), I adhere to such a view and recommend that a clear and unambiguous language policy needs to be articulated in the local context. This will positively impact on the educational sector as a whole.

11.3.2 Curriculum

- **There is an urgent need for a national curriculum, which would include all levels of primary education, including the preschool sector**

Presently, the preschool sector is operating with a curriculum, but it exists in a vacuum because the primary school sector is operating in a textbook-cum-curriculum type of model (Huang, 2004: 107). Besides, the existence of a preschool curriculum in the absence of a visible primary curriculum can be read as problematical in the sense that preschool education is not compulsory in Mauritius, while primary education is.

It thus seems high time for the educational authorities to go back to 1985 *Syllabuses for Primary Schools (Standards 1 to 6)*, a document that seems to have been forgotten in some MoE drawer, assess its relevance in the 21st century local context, and revisit and rewrite it (if needs be), in a spirit that acknowledges that Mauritian children need to learn in a foreign language (that is, they have to learn oral English as well as decoding skills in that language). This might result in a proposal for a national curriculum (pre- and primary school) that will harmonise the education sector. In the context where the Ministry of Education acknowledges that there is a gap between the preschool and Std1 ('Bridging the Gap'⁷¹ project), it should formalise this through a national preschool-primary school curriculum that would create the coherent link between the preschool and lower primary education sectors. As Myers (1992: 212) puts it "readiness of children for school and the school's readiness for the child should interact and should be considered together." This is possible at the juncture between preschool and primary school. I agree with Magnuson *et al.* (2007: 19), who says that, "skill acquisition is a cumulative process" and high quality education should be provided across the education system.

➤ **The preschool curriculum should be clear in setting the learning goals and learning outcomes for emergent readers/writers in foreign language contexts**

Referring to the USA, Scott-Little *et al.* (2006: 153) says that, "practitioners and policymakers [...] have recognized the importance of specifying the knowledge, skills and characteristics children should learn/develop during their preschool years." Hence, the different states have developed early learning standards, documents that articulate expectations for children's learning and development prior to kindergarten entry. The main purpose of having early learning standards is to guide teachers in their instruction (Scott-Little & Martella, 2006), rather than to prescribe.

As it exists, the 2003PPG claims that children should be initiated into oral English and pre-reading/writing in the preschool. However, although it claims to be an "outcomes-based" curriculum, the 2003PPG does not plainly set out the learning goals and

⁷¹ Abel (2007, p.c.) points out that the term has been used in the South African Molteno Project.

outcomes. Consequently, the classroom observations have shown PSA teachers' focus to be fairly narrowly the Std1 Maths and EVS syllabus, rather than a more general preparation for reading, writing and comprehending in English in Std1. If the preschool curriculum writers still believe that an outcomes-based preschool curriculum is appropriate for the local context, they could use the 1985 *Syllabuses for Primary Schools (Standards 1 to 6)* for Std1, which clearly articulates the aims and objectives ("Structures, Notions and Functions") and learning outcomes ("Desired Terminal Behaviour") as a starting point. The writers could also draw upon on other educational contexts that have an outcomes-based curriculum, and **adapt** them to the local context. Being familiar with the South African Reception Year *RNCS* for 'English-First Additional Language' and the British Reception Year *National Literacy Strategy*, I feel that the Mauritian preschool curriculum could inspire itself from **some** of the concepts used, such as "learning programmes", "learning outcomes" and "assessment standards" so as to develop a 'language arts' curriculum adapted to learners' needs in the local context. In the South African 2002 *RNCS*, learning outcomes describe what learners should know and be able to do; assessment standards describe the minimum level, depth and breadth of what is learnt; and learning programmes are structures and systematic arrangements of activities that promote the attainment of learning outcomes and assessment standards. Such clear terminology can only support teachers in their teaching practices.

Finally, in order to unambiguously define goals, objectives and outcomes for an English language arts preschool curriculum in Mauritius, curriculum writers have to pose the question of (1) what are the language and literacy needs of children?, and (2) "how to adapt early literacy instruction to meet the children's [linguistic] needs? (Neuman (1998: 6). These questions can only be addressed if curriculum writers engage in a situation analysis and needs analysis.

- **The multilingual nature of the local setting could be used as a resource in planning the ‘language arts’ curriculum**

My working description of EL (Ch3.10) is as follows:

- 1. Print/Decoding Skills**
- a. Print knowledge**
- concepts of print
 - attitudes to print
- b. Familiarity with the alphabet**
- 2. Oral skills: Language comprehension.**

This definition points out the importance of print/decoding skills and oral proficiency (Ch3.5.2) for enhanced second/foreign language literacy. In Mauritius, children learn to read and write in French (which they are exposed to almost every day and which is somewhat similar to Kreol) and English. While print/decoding skills are transferable skills, especially for languages sharing the same writing systems (French/English) (Ch9.3.2), oral language skills are language specific. It seems to me that any curriculum written in Mauritius should use this bilingual – biliteracy situation as a resource. Hence, I would recommend that a preschool ‘language arts’ curriculum should contain two aspects:

1) **A print/decoding aspect:** Some of the learning outcomes would be:

- Awareness of print and recognition of print available in the immediate environment;
- Identification of most, if not all, the letters of the alphabet;
- Ability to write some of the letters of the alphabet;
- Capacity to write one’s name;
- Familiarity and confidence with literacy-related activities, such as storybook reading;
- Interest in print-related materials and activities.

2) **An oral language skills aspect:** With respect to English, it seems to me that children should be made familiar with and introduced to beginners' English. By the time they start Std1, it would be to their advantage if they have passive knowledge and understanding of a set of English words and structures. Bearing in mind the existing Std1 textbook, curriculum writers should provide a word list, without which preschool teachers will feel at a loss as to what the learning goals and expected outcomes are.⁷² This basic proficiency in oral English can act as the crutch children will use to build their literacy skills.

Since 2005, MoE has initiated the "Bridging the Gap" project, which aims to make children's transition from the preschool to the primary school smooth. In January 2007 (refer to *L'Express*, 3 July 2007, "Bridging the gap" still needs to convince teachers'), this programme consisted of (1) recreating in the first term of Std1 the same environment as the preschool, and (2) not giving textbooks to Std1 children during that time. I would recommend that the MoE use the existing project to help bridge the language and literacy gap between the preschool and the primary school sectors. In this context, it is important to draw upon a more comprehensive theory of multilingualism to articulate the goals of the curriculum, as pointed out by Ballgobin (2007).

11.3.3 Teacher Training

Fukkink & Lont (in press) state that specialised teacher training is the cornerstone for quality early childhood care and education.

⁷² I have no competencies to suggest what the French 'language arts' programme should include.

- **In the context where teacher-training is the main mediator between the curriculum and the classroom, investment in teacher expertise is crucial to upgrade the quality of teaching**

Although there are macro-factors (policies, materials) and micro factors (teachers' enthusiasm)⁷³ that affect language use/language teaching decisions, teachers remain among the most decisive actors in determining how language/literacy will be used and taught (Cullen, 2001). The IRA (2005) position statement on literacy in preschool years clearly states that, "to be at the cutting edge of language and literacy instruction, preschool teachers and directors need to engage in continual professional development" (Anders *et al.*, 2000; Taylor *et al.*, 2000). Nowadays, teachers need more information and research-based expertise to select and use efficiently among the different specialisations in the field (Block, 2001; Block & Mangieri, 1996; Costa 2001, cited in Block *et al.*, 2002).

In many countries, intensive in-service teacher training accompanied changes in curricula. For instance, Nielsen *et al.* (2007) say that, "teacher improvement is a major underpinning of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation." Despite the limitations of the teacher training programmes (refer to Ch5.5.2) and their ultimate impact on teaching practices, teacher training accompanied the UK *National Literacy Strategy*, Zambia's *Reading Programme*, and the book flood experiments (Ch3.6.2), including the South African READ programme (Schollar, 2001). With the Mauritian preschool curriculum, the teacher training predated the 2003PPCG, but it is now running alongside the curriculum. However, having a teacher training programme is not in itself enough. What is essential is to invest in and develop **context-dependent pre-service teacher-training** and **regular context-dependent in-service teacher-training** that will enhance teacher expertise (Cox and Hopkins 2006: 262; Lipson & Wixson, 2004: 31). In the local context, teacher training should (1) be in a language that is easily accessible to teachers, (2) include provision for language improvement, and (3) put across language/literacy

⁷³ Alidou (2003) rightly says that teachers' enthusiasm is not enough for them to teach: teachers need training to teach in mother tongues as they need training to teach in the official languages.

teaching methodologies relevant to the age of preschoolers and to local context (Cullen, 2001). Such training is even more crucial in foreign language context, like Mauritius, because teachers are the linguistic models for the children in the FL classroom (Gil, 2002: 278).

➤ **Language improvement: upgrade the level of proficiency in English among teachers, through language training in the teacher training programme**

One of the factors cited as possibly explaining teachers' limited teaching of oral English was teachers' own English language proficiency and fluency (Ch6.4.5). It seems to me that one of the critical elements in the upgrading of teachers of English is the level of language proficiency/fluency that preschool teachers have. As with many EFL teacher-training courses, the teacher training available to Mauritian preschool teachers assumes (wrongly so) that preschool teachers are proficient in English. Therefore, aligning myself with Taylor *et al.* (2003: 65, cited in Chisholm, 2004:17), who argue for intensive instruction on the language of teaching and learning in teacher education, in the form of explicit programmes to develop proficiency amongst South African staff, I recommend that teacher training programme should include a component where preschool teachers are trained to develop English language proficiency/fluency. More specifically, drawing upon Sešek (2007: 12), I recommend that an 'English for Specific Purposes' (ESP) approach toward language training of EFL preschool teachers in Mauritius be used so that preschool teachers are trained to develop the English language competencies needed for preschool children. In this component of the teacher-training course, preschool teachers must be trained to develop (1) simple vocabulary, and (2) fluency in simple syntactical structures, since these are required for preschool teachers teaching beginners' English to young learners.

➤ **Teachers must be introduced to foreign language teaching methodology**

What is lacking in the present teacher-training programme is training on how to teach English, an FL, to young children. It seems to me that another essential component of the teacher-training programme would be to introduce teachers to playful ways of

introducing oral English to children through the use of songs, flash cards, games and picture books (Cameron, 2001; Rumley, 1999). The importance of “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1982) available in sufficient amounts must be made clear to preschool teachers. Such teacher training materials are available (Vale & Feunteun, 1995, for instance), but they need to be adapted to the local context.

➤ **Teachers should be trained to use context-sensitive approaches to literacy instruction**

In a very succinct phrase, Goodman (1997, cited in Bloch: 2002b: 75) says that there are “multiple roads to literacy.” What is important is to provide literacy instruction which on the one hand, is culturally and linguistically responsive, and which on the other hand, can provide the bridge between the school and the learner’s world (Callins, 2006). It seems to me that the teacher-training programme cannot ignore the local context, where (1) English is not utilised as a social language, and (2) both teachers and parents value the skills-based approach to literacy. In fact, Makin (2002) cites Neelands (2001) who warns of dangers of developing literacy policies that ignore family and community cultural contexts. For instance, Allen & Boykin (1992, cited in Goldenberg, 2004: 1649) argue that African-American children learn best from prescriptive pedagogy because of their socialisation experiences at home. I have argued that, by assuming that Western ideas must be right for every context, the definitive choice of ‘EL’ and ‘whole language approach’ in the local context has closed the door for the development of appropriate pedagogies for the specific educational traditions within which teachers are working in Mauritius (Littlewood, 2000, citing Liu, 1998). I therefore think that the research on the benefits of structured skills-based approach to teaching, as well as the beliefs and practices of the main partners (parents and teachers) involved in, and concerned by, preschool education, be taken into account. This would also be in line with the move away from a predominantly whole language approach to literacy instruction towards one that includes the teaching of basic decoding/language skills, within a meaningful literature-based approach that has been observed in England, USA and South Africa. I

would like here to refer to the Molteno project in South Africa,⁷⁴ *Breakthrough to Literacy*, which is a mother-tongue literacy course, combining phonics, look-and-say and 'whole language' methodologies in the process of teaching literacy to speakers of African language. *Bridge to English* is an 'English Additional Language' course, specifically designed to deal with the particularities of speakers of African languages learning English. The programme builds on foundation of literacy in African languages, developed in *Breakthrough to Literacy*, to teach English (Gains, 2000; Murray, 2002: 442). This NGO project shows the extent to which literacy instruction can be context dependent. According to Dikotla (2006), there have been more than 20 iterations of the project and all commented positively on the impact of this strategy for the acquisition of English. However, Grigorenko (2007: 172) warns us that the outcomes from the Molteno Project have not been published as empirical articles and it is thus difficult to validate these observations.

➤ **Teachers as readers: teachers should be trained to do storybook reading in the preschool**

The importance of developing discrete skills as a route to enhanced literacy development in the local context does not exclude the use of more top-down approaches to literacy instruction that literacy development as a meaning-making process. In fact, the experience among aborigines learning English in Australia (refer to Ch7.4.3) attracts our attention on the importance of teaching reading for meaning, while Cummins (2003: 3) says that, "a diet of engaging books works much better than a diet of worksheets and drills in developing reading comprehension and academic language." Similarly, Collins (2005: 408) argues that storybook reading is a valuable but unexplored medium for second language learners and merits substantial future research. Yet, storybook reading is a rare occurrence in PSA (Ch7.3.4, 7.4.4). In the context of the various benefits of storybook reading, I am of the opinion that storybook reading can be encouraged as a pleasurable activity in the preschool through teacher training. Teachers cannot be

⁷⁴ Refer to <http://www.molteno.co.za/About%2Easp>. Accessed 24 May 2007. This project exists in a number of African languages and has been extended to Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda, Lesotho and Ghana.

expected to know how to read French/English books written for native speakers to SL/FL learners. They have to be trained to choose books, appropriate to children's language proficiency, and possibly to create their own materials, when they find that the ready-made books are inappropriate. Neuman & Roskos (1992) argue that it is essential to ground the learning process in the local culture by moving everyday life in to schools to reflect more authentic situations, and this I think can be done, through context-sensitive storybook reading techniques and materials. My experience in PSB indicated that by teaching children a number of English words, simple, well-illustrated stories such as "The Ugly Duckling" (*Ladybird* collection, Level 1) can be read to the children.

➤ **Teachers as learners**

The teacher-training course as it exists, is perceived as being overtly theoretical, as using too much technical jargon, and by not being practical enough (Ch5.4). It seems to me that teachers would benefit from modelling in their training course. PSA teachers have mentioned their frustration with the TES, who tend to have a supervisory role rather than the role of a helpful knowledgeable other. In fact, they claimed that they would welcome any practical suggestions and demonstration from the TES. Indeed, such literacy coaches' modelling might be a "credible source of support for change, because literacy coaches [model] instructional practices in teachers' own classrooms" (Nielsen *et al.*, 2007). It is argued that teacher learning might be more likely to take place through practical experiences within teachers' own classroom, rather than by reading formal research and theory (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001; Munby *et al.*, 2001). Such support from the TES can only be possible if the TES themselves are trained as literacy coaches.

11.3.4 Teaching

➤ **A structured programme would help enhance the level of oral English proficiency and literacy skills, by optimising exposure to quality and quantity of input**

Although the thematic integrated approach is the preferred approach in the 2003PPG, the quasi-experimental design (OEIP) indicated that such an approach limited the quantity of

English input provided to PSA children. In fact, by using the thematic approach PSA teachers teach a set of English words related to one theme and move on to a different set of English words as they move on to work on another theme. Conversely, when they teach Maths and body parts, they teach the same words consistently over the year. Hence, while PSA children learn the Maths/body parts vocabulary (as seen in the test results), they do not remember much of the general English words. Moreover, a comparison of the test results on oral English for PSA and PSB children shows that PSB children benefited from a structured approach to oral English instruction.

The benefits of a structured approach are discussed in the literature. In broad terms, Scheerens (1992, cited in Fisher, 2001: 8) says that the two characteristics of school effectiveness are: (1) structured teaching, making learning objectives explicit, well-planned sequences, feedback, (2) effective learning time. Strickland (2002: 79) has claimed that “implementing quality classroom instruction in the regular classroom requires policies that provide large blocks of uninterrupted time or language arts instruction with flexible grouping patterns that allow for varied types of materials, instructional tasks and grouping structures.” According to De Jong & Lesaman (2001), under appropriate and maximised instruction, the remaining differences between children will reflect only innate and probably genetically rooted differences in potential (Brofenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Leseman & van den Boom, 1999). Focussing more particularly on preschool children, Sylva *et al.* (1999, cited in Aram & Biron, 2004: 605) have suggested that the direct literacy teaching method in reception class (4-5 year olds) can be more beneficial in promoting children’s later achievement in first grade than was indirect literacy exposure methods. As for language learners, Roberts & Neal (2004: 283) have argued that “children, at the very initial stages of English acquisition, could learn both linguistic comprehension and decoding-related components of early literacy from **explicit small group instruction**”, while Geva & Zadeh (2006: 50) have claimed that primary-level ESL children can develop accuracy and speed in L2 reading and achieve similar EL1 counterparts provided they are exposed to **systematic instruction in**

language and literacy in English [my emphasis] (Gernsten & Baker, 2003; Gernsten & Geva, 2003; Lesaux & Siegel, 2003).

I bear in mind,

- 1) the importance of emergent literacy skills to children's reading readiness and eventual reading ability (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002);
- 2) the local context, which is an acquisition-poor environment for oral English and literacy, and where teachers/parents value a skills-based direct-instruction approach;
- 3) the above-cited work and the British and South African curricula.

In view of the above, I recommend that the preschool programme should be structured, so as to include more traditional skills-based approach to literacy instruction, as well as broad EL skills evolving from interactions with books. Such a programme would include:

- **English as FL:** in which children can learn new words by hearing them repeatedly in context (Chatry-Komarek, 2003:116), thus build up vocabulary, before starting sentences (Cameron, 2001: 148). This suggestion is in line with Jackson *et al.* (2006), who say that interventions such as *Heads Up! Reading* which is a focused, age-appropriate language programme, is beneficial for preschool children (ELL and native speakers of English). This is also in line with Ramey and Ramey (2004), who have argued for the significant benefits of providing enriched learning opportunities to those children who do not receive them on a regular basis at home (Raney *et al.*, 1984). PSB children's performance showed significant progress in oral English on the post-test;
- **A skills-based approach to literacy instruction:** In the context where alphabet knowledge enhances literacy development, and parents/teachers believe in the benefits of a skills-based approach to literacy instruction, preschoolers can be taught to recognise the alphabet using age-appropriate direct teaching methods. I am not suggesting drills, but proposing that teaching a letter of the alphabet a day, or using such activities as recognition

of the letter in a word, or a letter matching games, or a scrabble-type of game, are playful ways of teaching the alphabet and should be explored.

Following Lawhon & Cobb (2002), routines and repetition should be built into the course, given that English is little used in the environment. Moreover, a playful approach could be used in class, with teachers making full use of games and songs (Rumley, 1999). Having such a planned, skills-based approach to teaching oral English and literacy does not, however, mean ignoring other approaches that can enhance the initiation to literacy. It is interesting to note that Hurd *et al.* (2006: 85) have critiqued the British *National Literacy Strategy* for adopting a skills-based approach to teach children to read, but failing to provide encouragement for them to read (as seen in the low and declining expenditure on books in British primary schools). Such an adverse effect of the skills-based approach must be taken into account and a structured syllabus should include activities containing indirect instruction, like storybook reading, which would enhance interest in reading and writing, and to demonstrate that literacy can have other functions than didactic and formal functions.

- **(Visual) Materials have to be chosen appropriately for the local context, be produced locally if needs be, and be accompanied by relevant teacher training**

Because they lack teacher training, PSA teachers over-rely on verbal strategies for English language teaching (Ch6). This is exacerbated by the fact that (1) they do not have appropriate (visual) materials (like flash cards) to use in the classroom, (2) they do not have access to facilities like photocopying, so their work preparation is done manually, and (3) they are poorly paid (Oliveira, 1996: 86; Lockheed *et al.*, 1991, cited in Greaney, 1996: 22), so they cannot be expected to prepare teaching materials at home using their own materials. In the local context, it seems essential for me to provide teachers with the materials. Using the themes that teachers work on, flash cards could be provided or produced for teachers to use to expose children to a certain number of lexical items in English. This would help teach English as a language which carries meaning, this would help avoid using code-switching and run the risk of having children switch off

on the English version of the word, and this would build an oral English proficiency which the children would then be able to use to understand simple sentences and stories. Moreover, storybooks of the type produced by Bloch (2002c), in the *Little Hands* collection, seems appropriate for the local context. Simple songs, with repetitive vocabulary, and the accompanying illustrations, could also be produced to initiate children in oral English and literacy. My experience of teaching the “This is the way I wash my hands/brush my teeth...” song, followed by a story (written locally, using photos of my daughter and using the same vocabulary – **Photo library, PSB**) showed children’s interest and positive response in that they requested the story to be told again and again. However, once again, simply providing a rich array of resources without ensuring teachers’ expertise will not be enough to improve children’s literacy development (McGill-Franzen *et al.*, 1999; Rogers *et al.*, 2006).

➤ **All stakeholders should work together for enhanced literacy development at school**

Enhancing literacy in a FL is not a simple task and there is no quick or easy solution. The development of a literate environment and literate practices are efforts that will have to span over a few generations (Walter, 1996: 146). Although there are various projects which have included parents in changing literacy behaviours,⁷⁵ it seems to me that in the local context, it would be more realistic to start the change, if one believes that there should be some kind of change as I do, in the school. Although it is important to make parents aware of the importance of developing literacy skills/practices (like reading) for enhanced school performance, it seems that in the local context (where parents themselves are products of a colonial education system and cannot move out of it readily), it is the school that will have the main responsibility of fostering literacy.

I would thus support Abel’s (2003: 136) argument about the need for a synergy between professionals and schools in developing countries (like South Africa), the need to have an

⁷⁵ Family literacy programmes have been used among Hispanic families in the USA, especially where parental literacy is low.

“ongoing relationship between team members, who fully understand the realities in multilingual settings, and the schools they support.” This synergy, this collaboration between the various partners involved in inculcating a reading culture and teaching of reading, should be initially organised with the school as the main location for change.

11.4 Contributions to knowledge, educational practice and research

From my reading of the literature on language-in-education policies and practices in post-colonial contexts and in Mauritius and its effects on the preschool sector, this research has made four contributions:

- 1) It has argued that there is a lack of conceptual clarity for the much-utilised term ‘language-in-education policy’ (Young, July, 2006, p.c.).⁷⁶ While the term has been constantly used in language policy and language planning, the term has tended to refer to oral skills and/or literacy (decoding) skills, apparently giving precedence to oral skills and usually not making clear the relationship between the two (for instance, Byram, 2000: 337).⁷⁷ In postcolonial contexts, characterised by multilingualism and by an oral tradition (where many languages are not standard written languages), the absence of conceptual distinctions remains problematic if one wants to deal with educational issues and problems;
- 2) It has drawn attention to the fact that in contexts where children learn to read and write in a language other than their L1 (that is, in their L2 or an FL), the oral foundation on which literacy skills will be built needs to be seriously considered in the light of existing research on oral proficiency being the foundation of literacy;
- 3) The findings from this study add on to research done by Prinsloo (2005) and Street (1995): while they conceive of literacy as a socially situated activity, the present study indicates that the practices associated with language teaching and literacy instruction are also historically, socially and culturally constructed and situated. These practices

⁷⁶ I here acknowledge that the ambiguity within the term has been pointed out in the fruitful discussions that I had with my supervisor, Emeritus Professor Douglas Young, UCT.

⁷⁷ “Thus learning through a particular language as medium is increasingly seen as a means of in-depth ACQUISITION of the language. This is particularly the case in situations where the purpose for teaching the language is to maintain or restore its use in a collectivity.” Although the meaning of the phrase “in-depth ACQUISITION” is open to interpretation, it seems to refer to both oral and written skills.

need to be taken into consideration before any change in curriculum or teaching approach is considered;

- 4) This thesis suggests that teacher literacy habits are different in different contexts and that these literacy practices impact on teachers' own literacy practices. Hence, teacher literacy habits should be taken into account when planning curricula and teacher training programmes.

From my reading of the literature on preschool literacy experiences in developing post-colonial countries and my own research in Mauritius, this research has made five contributions:

- 1) It has provided a much-needed insight and understanding into the hitherto neglected aspects of the transition from pre-primary to primary education in Mauritius, in relation to some of the African/Asian pre-primary contexts;
- 2) It has stressed that literacy is a vague term to use for a very multifaceted construct. Unless we understand the components that make up literacy, we cannot hope to understand literacy development or to enrich education systems so as to raise literacy levels;
- 3) It has pointed out that literacy development is a complex process, where success is possible when there is the optimal interaction between the development of skills in individuals and the context that supports the development of these skills. This research emphasises that in contexts like Mauritius, where the written medium is significantly different from the oral medium, literacy development cannot be taken for granted;
- 4) It has explored EL experiences for children whose home and school languages are different. Through its literature review, this study has suggested that children' literacy development is built on oral proficiency in the same language. Developing FL oral proficiency before learning to read and write in that FL has not been a concern of Ministry officials, producing an extremely challenging situation for children embracing literacy in Std1 in the local context;

- 5) It has brought to light that in developing countries, parents' role as 'knowledgeable others' is limited by the constraints of history, economy and society. Parents in the developing world, despite their keen interest in their children's education, are different from parents in developed and highly literate countries. One must, therefore, be realistic about one's expectations from parents in terms of their contribution to their children's academic development. The preschool, its curriculum and teachers, are thus crucial vectors for children's early literacy development.

11.5 Recommendations for further research

Recommendations for further research are:

- To use a more quantitative research design to investigate the strategies preschool teachers use in other preschools to introduce children to oral English and initiate them into literacy (other postcolonial settings and other types of preschools in Mauritius). This recommendation is made in the light of the critique Heugh (2006) makes of research, in particular Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research like Doughty & Long (2003), which does not collect data from multilingual contexts like Africa;
- To adopt an ethnographic approach so as to probe into the reading culture of Mauritians from various social and educational backgrounds;
- To consider the long term effects of an OEIP as the one carried out in Phase 3 of this research on Mauritian children;
- To carry out research to enquire into the role of older siblings in younger siblings' oral English and literacy development in Mauritius, as well as other postcolonial contexts;
- To carry out research in the literacy practices related to religion in the Mauritian context;
- To investigate Mauritian children's actual proficiency in French, given that preschool teachers tend to prefer using French with them as the language of communication;

- To investigate the extent to which children engage in print-related activities voluntarily in preschool classrooms, in Mauritius and other postcolonial settings
- To carry out research investigating whether there are distinctive features in the English spoken in Mauritius, whether there is a local variety of English emerging locally.

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PIIOTO LIBRARY, PSA



Photo A: Child's drawing under teacher's written instructions



Photo B: 'Functional literacy' activity



Photo C: Copying 'mother' written by teacher



Photo D: Drawing and copying words

PHOTO LIBRARY, PSB



Photo E: Using a picture book 1



Photo F: Using a picture book 2



Photo G: Using ready-made flashcards



Photo H: Playing with handmade flashcards



Photo I: Using flashcards to teach vocabulary



Photo J: Reading a storybook



Photo K: Reading a handmade storybook 1 Photo L: Reading a handmade storybook 2



Photo M: Teaching shapes using a big book

SOME OF THE MATERIALS USED IN PSB



Photo N: Picture Book



Photo O: Self-made storybook 1



Photo P: Self-made storybook 2



Photo Q: Picture book and self-made flash cards

Sample: Task 1C (i)



Task 1C (ii)



Sample: Task 1D



Sample: Test 2



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University of Cape Town

APPENDIX A: Pilot study: Teacher questionnaire

Dear Teacher, I am working on language practices at pre-primary level and would be grateful if you would fill in the following questionnaire. I would appreciate it if you would give as truthful and sincere answers and opinions as possible. The materials from this questionnaire will be treated in strict confidentiality. Many thanks.

Part A: Yourself ...

➤ Educational background

CPE ☐ Lower secondary ☐
 Sat for SC ☐ Passed SC ☐
 Sat for HSC ☐ Passed HSC ☐
 Any others? Specify

➤ Professional background

Playgroup ☐ Bethlehem ☐ OMEP ☐ PPU ☐
 MIE/MCA 1994-1998 ☐ MIE/MCA post 1998 ☐ Montessori ☐
 Any others? Specify

➤ Work experience

For how long have you been a pre-school teacher?.....
 Which schools have you worked at before?

 ..

➤ Your language profile

Which language(s) do you usually use to speak to the following people:	
• Father?	
• Mother?	
• Brothers/sisters?	
• Friends at work?	
• Neighbours?	
• Headmistress?	
• Other teachers?	
• Public officer at a ministry?	

Which language(s) do the following people usually use to speak to you:	
• Father?	
• Mother?	
• Brothers/sisters?	
• Friends at work?	
• Neighbours?	
• Headmistress?	
• Other teachers ?	
• Public officer at a ministry?	

Which language(s) do you prefer using for the following:	
• Watching TV?	
• For a religious ceremony?	
• Reading Newspapers/magazines?	
• Reading Books?	
• Listening to Radio/Cassettes?	

Part B: At school...

➤ Language background of the school children

In your opinion, are children exposed to the following languages at home?

	In oral form			In written form		
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never
Kreol						
English						
French						
Bhojpuri						
Oriental languages						

➤ Languages used in the classroom by the children

What language(s) do the children **usually** use to:

- Speak to you?.....
- Speak to each other?.....

Why do you think they use these languages?

Do any of the children ever use any English in class? Yes/No

If yes, when?.....

➤ Languages used in the classroom by the teacher

What language(s) do you use to address the children in class?

.....

What language(s) do you use to:

- Teach a song?.....
- Teach a poem?
- Read a story?
- Teach a concept?
- Teach colours, shapes, numbers and letters?.....

Do you ever teach English? Yes/No

If you use English, how do you do so? Do you use:

- Songs(give a few examples)

- Nursery rhymes..... (give a few examples)
- Stories.....(give a few examples)
- Drama.....
- Role Play
- Conversation.....
- Mime.....
- Words(give a few examples)
- Translation (give a few examples)

Do you think that children learn any English with these activities? What do you think they learn?

.....

Which activities do you think are (most) effective?

.....

Which one of the above activities do the children like most?

.....

Do you ever use English to communicate with the children? Yes/No
Why?

Do you include some English in the everyday daily-weekly lesson plan?
Yes/No

Why? Why not?

.....

➤ **Teacher training course**

Do you think that the teacher-training course prepared you for the language situation in Mauritius? Yes/No
If yes, how?

.....

Do you think there was anything lacking in the course?

.....

...

Are you told what language to use in the preschool? Yes/No
What are you told?

.....

Do you agree with this language policy?

.....

Why? Why not?

.....

Are you given any information/guidance on the teaching/learning of other languages at preschool? Yes/No

What kind of guidance are you given?

Are you given any theoretical foundations to the learning of languages at this level? Yes/No

If yes, of what kind?

Do you think that English should be included as a compulsory subject/aspect in the pre-primary syllabus? Yes/No

Why? Why not?

Here are some statements about the English language in Mauritius. Please say whether you agree or disagree or are not sure:

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
It is important to be able to speak English.			
It is important to be able to read English.			
It is important to be able to write English.			
English is a beautiful language.			
I'd like my children to speak English fluently.			
Speaking English helps people get better jobs.			
Knowing English will make people more knowledgeable.			
English is the language of progress and modernization.			
English is a language worth learning.			
Pre-school children are too young to be introduced to languages other than their mother tongue.			
Only some children are capable of learning another language at pre-primary level.			
Pupils should use only their mother tongue in the preschool.			
Pupils should be introduced to English in the preschool.			
Pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from preschool.			
Any Mauritian child is capable of learning English at preschool.			
Children from English medium schools are at an advantage compared to other children when they enter primary school.			
It would be desirable to have Kreol as a medium of instruction throughout pre-primary and primary education.			
Teachers should use only Kreol in preschools			

APPENDIX B: Census data

Table (1): Language of forefather and language usually spoken at home in the population censuses (1972, 1983, 1990, 2000)¹

	1972		1983		1990		2000	
	Population: 826 199		Population: 966 863		Population: 1 056 660		Population: 1 143 069	
	LoFF	HL	LoFF	HL	LoFF	HL	LoFF	HL
Creole	272 075 33%	428 427 51.8%	280 377 29%	521 950 54%	379 288 36%	652 193 61.7%	420 344 36.8%	791 465 69.2%
English	2 402 0.3%	2 272 0.27%	1 903 0.2%	2 028 0.2%	888 0.08%	2 240 0.2%	1 073 0.09%	3 505 0.3%
French	36 729 4.4%	39 234 4.8%	32 627 3.4%	36 048 3.7%	22 367 2.1%	34 455 3.3%	21 090 1.8%	39 827 3.5%
Creole+ French					15 023 1.4%	21 387 2.6%	17 873 1.6%	33 216 2.9%
Bhojpuri			180 983 18.7%	197 050 20.4%	343 832 32.5%	201 618 19.1%	361 184 31.6%	142 385 12.5%
Creole+ Bhojpuri					34 371 3.2%	48 579 4.6%	65 775 5.8%	64 089 5.6%
OL:²	490 092 59.3%	344 325 41.7%	461 541 47.7%	205 187 21.2%	188 115 17.8%	44 822 4.2%	154 501 13.5%	26 490 2.3%
Creole and OL					21 877 2.1%	12 787 1.2%	34 138 2.9%	19 179 1.7%

LoFF: Language of Forefather, HL: Home Language

Note: I here use the spelling 'Creole,' as it appears written as such in the population censuses.

¹ It must be noted that the number of languages offered as an option in the language census has increased over the year. While the 1972 census gave only 12 options, the 1990 and 2000 censuses have given 53 options, acknowledging the multilingualism of Mauritians.

² In Mauritius, Oriental languages include Arabic, Hindi Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Urdu, Chinese, Cantonese Hakka, and Mandarin.

Table (2): Languages read and written by the resident population 12 years of age and over in the 2000 Census

Languages read and written										
	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Other	Not stated
Urban	406 079	40 552	14 695	481	786	7 667	289 802	49 973	296	1 827
Rural	504 537	90 521	14 995	1 731	2 606	14 611	257 125	121 002	300	1 646
Total	910 616	131 073 (14.4%)	29 690 (3.3%)	2 212 (.25%)	3 392 (.37%)	22 278 (2.4%)	546 927 (60%)	170 975 (18.8%)	596	3 473

1: Illiterate; 2: Literate in Creole only; 3: Literate in Bhojpuri only; 4: Literate in Creole and Bhojpuri only; 5: Literate in Oriental languages only, or in OL as well as Creole/Bhojpuri, but excluding European languages; 6: Literate in European languages only or in European languages as well as Creole and/or Bhojpuri, but excluding Oriental languages; 7: Literate in both European and Oriental languages with or without Creole or Bhojpuri.

Note: I here use the spelling 'Creole,' as it appears written as such in the population censuses.

APPENDIX C: The primary curriculum

C.1 MES/CPE Reports

Table (3): Extracts from MES/CPE Reports

Year	Extracts
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Often rigid rote learning of rules was given priority over good English.” (pg. 2) • “Only 23% pupils/candidates doing satisfactorily in this question.” (Referring to the composition) (pg. 4)
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The drop in quality clearly revealed in Q5 and Q6 cannot but have its roots in the overall teaching/learning of the language skills which rests on too mechanistic an approach rather than geared to the real mastery of linguistic competencies.” (pg. 1) • “Too many candidates showed that they read mechanically – not with understanding.” (pg. 4)
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The issue of poor reading skills is chronic rather than accidental.” (pg. 6) • Previous reports have also sounded the alarm bell about the teaching/learning of English in our primary schools. However, instead of improving, the situation seems to be worsening.” (pg. 7)
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The trend observed over the last few years concerning the decline in the level of reading and writing is persisting and very worrying.” (pg. 1)
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “All practice must be underpinned by some kind of theory and candidates would certainly do better if certain basic rules of English were taught to them in interactive classroom activities.” (pg. 6) • “Only regular readers of English can hope to score full marks on this question. To build up a solid vocabulary, pupils need to read English for pleasure or information regularly.” (pg.12)

C.2 The main events in the historical development of the primary school curriculum in Mauritius

1971-1980:

- The government planned to diversify the curriculum, to include technical subjects and integrated science at all levels, so as to address economic problems (Bunwaree, 1994: 99);
- Venkatasamy (1979) proposed a Mauritianisation of the curriculum.

1982 – 1983:

- The Glover Report:
 - commented on the over-burdened curriculum (p.49),
 - suggested that the MIE should work on a curriculum that would ensure coherence and continuity between the primary and secondary curricula (p.80),

- proposed a preschool 'curriculum', so as to bring preschool children to similar levels as they start Std1.

1985:

- Curriculum development activities were taken over by the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), under the aegis of the MoE.
- As a result of the The Primary Curriculum Development Project (1981-1985), *Syllabuses for Primary Schools, Standards 1 to 6* is published by the CDC. This syllabus:
 - clearly articulates educational objectives, specific objectives, methodology, course content and desired terminal behaviours for each subject area (English, French, Maths, EVS, Creative Education, Movement Education, Oriental languages),
 - led to the re-writing and revising of primary school textbooks (MIE Annual Reports, 1981, 1982-1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989).

1991:

- *The Master Plan:*
 - proposed a curriculum reform,
 - suggested that Essential Learning Competencies (ELC) be developed,
 - recommended the setting up of the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD).

1992:

- The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) produced a document *Learning Competencies for AI*, which:
 - is produced for Std4-6 only (UNESCO/IIEP, 2006: 20);³
 - led to (1) the revision of textbooks, and (2) the redesigning of the end-of-primary school exams (CPE) in 1994 (MIE Annual Reports, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997-1998).

³ The learning competencies for English include Listening with Understanding, Speaking, Reading, Written Expression, Functional Grammar, Self-learning and Enjoyment, Attitudes and Values. It also contains a list of words prepared from Michael West's A General Service List of English Words. Children are expected to (1) read/understand approximately 700 words, (2) spell approximately 300 words, and (3) make and write descriptive sentences by the time they reach Std4.

1993:

- The CDC became the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development (NCCRD), but the MIE continued to provide the expertise;
- The main aim of the NCCRD is to implement directives laid by the National Curriculum Board (NCB), to plan, develop and implement curricula, to develop and produce materials, to organise training and evaluate curriculum programmes. A *Lower Primary Curriculum Development Project (Std1-3)* is launched, with the aim to re-examine the content areas and pay attention to the competencies to be developed at this level (Venkatasamy, 1993);
- To date, school textbooks are produced by NCCRD, and are freely distributed to all children in Government primary schools.

1998:

- *The Action Plan* proposed a curriculum renewal, so as to:
 - offer new subjects at primary level (Civic Education, computer education, life Skills),
 - download the contents of the curriculum,
 - have a broad-based curriculum with specialisation in college;
- The *Action Plan* also proposed the blue-print for a preschool curriculum (child-centred, developmental areas, language and literacy, active learning, thematic approach).

2001:

- The *Ending the Rate Race* document focused on overhauling the primary curriculum to give children a broader-based education, with the addition of new examinable subjects, such as IT.
- As a result, the 2001 *Curriculum Renewal* was produced, and proposed a new curriculum, which (1) aims to respond to basic learning needs that comprise essential learning tools and basic learning content, and (2) includes an integrated curriculum for Std1-3.

2005:

- A National Debate on Curriculum Reforms is launched by the MoE, in the form of a two-day conference in December 2005. This led to the production of a document *Towards a Quality Curriculum* in November 2006, which proposed the setting up of:
 - a *National Curriculum Advisory Committee*, to provide the main orientations for education in Mauritius,
 - a *National Steering Committee*, to develop a national curriculum framework,
 - an *Early Childhood Authority* to set up and provide guidelines for a Pre-Primary Education Programme.
- The aim of the new curriculum is to de-load the primary school curriculum. It proposes subjects to be taught at primary and secondary levels;
- Agencies to implement curriculum change are mentioned: through teacher education and training, continuous professional development, reinforcing language proficiency of teachers, inspection and supervision, school management;
- In December 2006, a new set of Std1 textbooks were produced;
- According to officials in the MOE, they are working on the curriculum framework as this thesis is being finalised (September 2007).

2006:

- The Workshop Report (Georgescu, 2006) suggests a competencies-based approach, to replace the traditional content- and objectives-based curricula.

APPENDIX D: Standard1 Textbooks

D.1 Words

Although I am aware of the complexity of the meaning of the very word WORD, for the purposes of this list, I have defined WORD simply as a free morpheme.

Below is a breakdown, in alphabetical order, of all the words that appear in the English and Maths/EVS textbooks. For the purposes of this list:

- I have included as a WORD: function words and content words;
- I have counted as a separate word those words that appear with a bound morpheme, ie, for this list, *short*, *shorter* and *shortest* are counted as three separate words. The reason I chose to do this is because I am here dealing with 5 year olds who must know the concept (of shortness for example) to be able to know the difference that English makes between *short* and *shorter*. Furthermore, for Mauritian children whose L1 is Kreol, what appears as a bound inflectional morpheme in English generally appears as a separate word in Kreol. For instance:

Short: 'court'; shorter: 'plus court';

Jump(s): 'sauté'; jumping: 'pé sauté';

Apple: 'pomme'; apples: 'bocou pomme'.

Key to reading the list:

ENGLISH: words that appear in the English school textbook

EVS - MATHS: all the words that appear in the Maths and EVS textbooks.

- In *bold* are those words that already appear in the English textbook.
- The figure following each word is an indication of the number of times the word occurs in the written form, in the respective books.

Table (4): Raw data from Std1 textbooks

	ENGLISH	EVS	MATHS
A	A (97), am (2), an (3), animals, apple (2)	A (40) , absorbs, activity (2), after, afternoon (2), all (7), also (2), always, am (7) , an , and (30), animal, animals (2) , another, any (2), appearance, apple (4) , are (6), arm, around, as (3), ask, at (8), ate (2), aubergine	A (51) , add, after (92), afternoon, all(3), along (2), an (6) , and (35), animal (5), apples (2) , appropriate, are (2), arms (2), arrange (7), article, as (2), at, away
B	Bag (5), ball (5), banana (4), basket (3), big, bird (2), blue (3), boat (3), book (6), bottle (5), box (5), boy (10), broom(4)	Baby (2), bad (5), bath, bathroom, baths (2), be (4), bed (2), bedroom, beetroot, best (2), bird , birthday (3), biscuits, bite, blue (3) , body (7), box (10) , boy (13) , boy's, bread (5), breakfast (3), brush (2), butter (2), buy, by (2)	Bags, balloons, balls (2), bananas, basket , be(8), been, before, big (2) , bigger (9), biggest (4), birds (2), black (3), blue (15) , books (3), bottle , box (32) , boxes (4), boy (4) , boys (3)

C	Cake (4), car (6), carrot (4), cat (8), chair (3), cow (3), cup (3)	Can (11), canned, cannot (3), care, caring, carrot (2), celebrating, cheese (3), chicken (4), child (8), children (2), chocolate(2), chosen, circle (9), circled, clap, clean (20), clothes (8), colour (73), colouring, come, comes, comfortable (2), complete, covered, cross (14)	Can (2), cap, car (3) , Carol (2), cent (4), child (11), children, circle (9), circles (8), coin(14), coins (3), colour (61), colours (3), column, comes (2), complete (8), contain
D	Dog (5), door (3), dress (5), drink, drinking, duck (3)	Day, develop, did, different (7), dining, dinner (4), dirty (6), do (9), does, dog, door (2) , draw (34), drawing (7), drawings (9), drink (3)	Day, diagram (5), different (2), done, dotted (2), down (2), draw (58), dress, duck (3) , dwarfs
E	Eat, eating (2)	Each (4), ear (2), ears(3), eat (11) , eating (4) , egg (2), everybody (2), everyday (4), exercises (2), eye, eyes (3)	Each (112), eight (8), either, event, exactly, example (10), examples
F	Filling station, fish (7), flag (6), flower (5)	Family (8), father, feathers, feel (2), feet (4), finger, fireman, fish (4) , flour, flower (4) , flying, food (29), foods, foot, footwear (3), for (25), friend, friends, from (4), fruit (3), fruits (3)	Figure (2), fill (3), find, fingers, fish , five (5), flag , flag pole, following (3), foot, for (10), form (2), four (8)
G	Girl (6), goat (3), green (3)	Girl (9) , girls (2), go, good (4), green (4) , grow (3), guava, guess	Girl (8) , given (5), glass, goats, green (21) , group (11)
H	Hat (5), he (6), hello (5), hen (2), house (5)	Habit, habits (4), hair (10), hairs (2), hand (4), hands (7), happy (8), have (4), head health, healthy (6), hear (3), hello (2) , help (3), helping, himself, hole, home (3), house (6) , how (6), hurt	Hair, hand, happens, has, hat (3) , hats, having (2), head, height (3), his, house (2) , how (4)
I	I (2), I'm, is (48), it's (48)	I (57) , ice cream, in (27), inside, is (10), it (2), item (4), its	In (116), insect, inside(2), is (6) , its (3)
J	Jump, jumping (2)	Jam, juice (3), just	Join (20)
K	Kite (4)	Keep (8), keeping (2), kitchen, kite (2)	
L	Long, lychee (2)	Land, last, leg, let, lettuce (2), lid, like (4), lips, listen, live, long , look (3), looking, love (3), lunch (3)	Ladder, leaves, left (3), legs (3), length (4), lines(3), longer (4), longest (4), look

M	Man (7), mango (4), mug (7), my (3)	Makes (3), making, market, match (7), may, me (3), mechanic, member, members, milk(6), more, morning, mother (8), mouth, much, must (4), my (30), myself (2)	Make, many (4), match (23), member (3), members (34), missing (25), more (2), morning, mug (2) , mugs
N	Name (4)	Nails (11), name (13), need (13), never (2), nice (2), night, noon, nose (5), not	Nail, name (4) , names, night, nine, no (7), now, number (13), number name (19), number names (7), numeral (53), numerals (30)
O	Objects, orange (2)	Object (3), objects (2) , observe, observing, occasion (2), occasions, octopus, of (28), on (19), one (4), onions, or (3), other, our (4)	Object (15), objects (3) , of (68), on (10), one (42), or (2), order (18), ordinal, out (6), outside (2), over
P-Q	Pawpaw (4), pen (3), pencil (11), pineapple (4), plate (4), potato (5)	Parts (5), party, pet, pets, physical, picture (117), pictures (4), pineapple , place, plane (2), plant, plants (2), play, policewoman, potatoes (2), prefer (2), protect (2), protected, protection, pupil (2), pupils, put (17)	Pair (3), partition, paste, pay, pencil , person (4), picture (5), pictures (3), Put (16)
R	Rabbit (4), rat (3), read, reading, red (3)	Rabbit , rainy, red (2) , regular (3), regularly (2), rice (3), right (5), roof (2), room (2), run	Reach, rectangle (10) rectangles (3), red (24) , represent (3), ring (25), row (2), rupee (3)
S	School (2), she (4), short (2), slate (7), small, standing, sweep, sweeping	Sad (4), safe (2), salad, scales, school (3), see (7), shell, shelter (2), shelters, shoe (2), shoes (4), shop, short (2) , show (4), showing (6), shows (2), size (2), sleep (2), sleeps, smell (3), soap (2), some (3), something (4), sometimes, squash, stick, story, strong (3), suitable (2), surroundings, sweat, sweets (2)	Same (5), scene (2), school , set (64), sets (29), seven (4), shape, shapes (2), shirt, shorter (10), shortest (12), show (2), showing (4), silhouette, six (3), skirt, small (2) , smaller (9), smallest (10), spots (2), square (9), squares (6), squid, star, stars (2), starting (11), sums (2), swimmer
T	Table (3), tall, the (17), this (17), tomato (5), tree (4)	Table , take (8), taken, takes (2), tea (3), teeth (11), thank you, that (8), that's, the (180) , them (3), things (4), this , tick (6), tidy (3), to (30), toe, toilet, tongue, too (3), toothbrush, trace, trim (5), trimmed, two (2), type (5), types (3)	Tail (2), taken, takes, taller (6), tallest (8), ten (2), that (5), the (320) , then (11), there (6), these, this , three (9), tick (38), time, to (50), toes, tomatoes, total, trace (2), tree (5) , triangle (7), triangles (5), t-shirt (3), two (11)

U, V, W, X, Y, Z	Walking (9), wall (2), what's (2), window (2), woman (7), words (2), write, yellow (3), your (2)	Ventilated, walls (2), was, wash (2), washing, water (2), we (3), wear (8), wearing, wedding, well (2), what (14), what's, when (4), where (2), which (7), who (8), why (4), windows (2), with (13), would (2), write , yellow , yesterday, yoghurt, you (39), your (23), yourself	Under (21), use (2), using (3), value (3), vegetables, wearing, what, which (5), who (3), will (6), with (18), words, work (4), write (57), writing (22), written (2), yellow (17), yes (7), you, zero (2)
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According to the above table, there are 95 words that are introduced to the children in the English book, compared to 496 words that are seen in the Maths and EVS textbooks. In terms of percentage, the English textbook only introduces the child to 16% of the words that then appear in his other textbooks.

D.2 Phrases /Sentences

➤ The English textbook

The first half of the English textbook consists only of drawings, and a few exercises where the students are shown to distinguish among alphabets. No word appears in the written form. From the Teachers' Resource Book, it is advised that teachers spend the first half of the book with oral activities and pre-writing activities. It is only in the second half of the book that words appear in their written form. As far as we can see, the second half of the book is organized in the following manner:

1. Introduction of NP = a + NOUN
2. NP = a + ADJECTIVE + NOUN
3. Simple sentences with verb *to be*: This is a = NP /It is a + NP
4. Introduction of lexical verbs
5. Sentences including lexical verbs in the present continuous tense.
6. Introduction of the personal pronouns: boy/he, girl/ she

Below is a list of sentence constructions that I found in the English textbook:

A + **ADJECTIVE** (big/small, long/short, tall/short) + **NOUN**

It's + a + **NOUN**

This + is + a + **NOUN**

The + **NOUN** + is + **COLOUR**

It's + a + **COLOUR** + **NOUN**

• The EVS textbook

Some of the instructions found in the book are listed below:

Page Number	Instructions
1	• Stick your name in the box
2	• How I look – I look nice
	• Colour the boy and the girl
3	• Trace along the dotted lines
4	• I observe the different parts of the body

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 5, 8, 9 | • Draw a girl/the eyes/the nose |
| 10 | • Colour the child who can see the flower/Colour the child who can smell the flower |
| 12 | • Put a cross on the child who cannot hear the plane |
| 45 | • Complete the drawings showing the hairs, scales, feathers, shell. |
| 49 | • Colour the policewoman blue |
| 59 | • Draw something that makes you sad. |

➤ **The Maths textbook**

In the Maths textbook, as from the first page, fairly complex instructions are given. For instance, on page 1, there are two activities and two instructions:

- Colour the circles green
- In each set, colour the smaller circle red

Below is a list of the instructions that are found throughout the book:

- (in each set), Colour + the+ (SIZE- in comparative or superlative) + SHAPE + COLOUR
- Draw a (SIZE) (SHAPE) (COLOUR) in each set
- Colour the (SHAPES) (COLOUR) and the (SHAPE) (COLOUR)
- Draw lines to join the same shapes
- Match each object with the correct shape
- Draw a (DRAWING) inside/outside the (SHAPE/OBJECT) and draw a (DRAWING) inside/outside the (SHAPE/OBJECT)
- Ring the set of (SIZE) (COLOUR) (OBJECTS) (VERB-ing) (OBJECT) [eg: boys wearing hats]
- Use the shapes and make sets of ...
- Match one to one
- Is there a/an (OBJECT AS A DRAWING) for each (OBJECT – DRAWING)?
- Tick the set with (more/less) members
- Join the sets to form a bigger set
- Partition the sets
- Tick each set containing ...
- Draw sets of ...(NUMBERS)
- Draw one tail to each animal
- Writing of the numeral (NUMBER) – Writing of the number name (NUMBER)
- Count, then write the correct numeral and number name in each box
- Trace along the dotted lines to complete each figure
- Arrange in order, starting with the (SIZE - smallest) number of (OBJECTS)
- Write the missing numerals/number names
- Write the numerals in order starting with the smallest
- Tick/Colour/Draw the (SIZE) object in each set
- Put a tick under the sets which contain objects of the same length
- Colour the T-shirt of the taller boy blue

- In each set draw an object which will be the longest
- In each set colour the longest object yellow and the shortest object red
- Colour the T-shirt of the tallest child green and that of the shortest child red
- Colour each numeral and its number name using the same colour. Use different colours for each pair
- Who takes a shorter time to reach school?
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th,10th
- Colour the skirt of the 2nd girl green
- Draw a hat on the head of the 5th girl
- How many (OBJECTS) in all?

University of Cape Town

APPENDIX E: Pre-primary education in Mauritius

E.1 The historical development of preschool education in Mauritius

Table (5): The main events of the pre-primary education sector in Mauritius⁴

Date	Event
1950s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mauritian preschool classroom in the 1950s consisted mainly of preparing the child to go directly into Standard 2.
1954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This 'below-class'⁵ was officially abolished in 1954, but according to the 1966 Council of Education Report, there were approximately 500 pre-primary schools in the mid 1960s whose aim was still to teach literacy and the Standard 1 syllabus.
Late 1970s -early 1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) launched a course for preschool educators, which then took the challenge of training some 3000 in-service preschool teachers in the regional centres. Although approved by the Ministry of Education, the course was not accredited. The MIE then worked with teacher educators and a pool of contributors to build up a recognised course for preschool teachers.
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of pre-primary schools went up to roughly 800 "ti l'écoles"⁶, with approximately 25 000 out of 40 000 children attending some pre-primary school. As women entered the labour market in the 1980s (Bennett, 2000: 11), preschool education became more popular. A survey of the facilities for pre-primary schools carried out with the support from UNICEF, showed that only 30% of preschool teachers had some training in infant schooling (0-3). At the time some 70% of children were in preschools. In response to the needs of preschool teachers, the PPU (Pre-Primary Unit) was set up. First resource centre in Quatre-Bornes. MoE realised that there were no training facilities available for preschool teachers, apart from the training dispensed by NGOs. MoE sought the support of friendly countries to upgrade the sector (Denemark, India, France, Britain).
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its <i>Directorate Pre-Primary</i>, the MoE took charge of policy-making and monitoring of the preschool system. This Directorate is assisted in its task by the regional directorates.
1980-1982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting up of some 6 preschools, attached to primary schools and regional training centres, with the aim to provide training to teachers. This training led to a Preschool Teacher Educators Proficiency.
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of the PSTF (Pre-School Trust Fund) to mobilise resources for the extension of preschool projects. Pursuant to Act No. 41 of 1984, the PSTF is allowed to employ Teacher Educators/Supervisors (TES). Their duties include setting up regional training centres for preschool teachers, mobilising teaching resources, planning and implementing basic training programmes, visiting and providing advice to a number of fixed preschools, monitoring the opening of new private preschools, processing and recommending the registration of new preschools, managing the payment of per capita grants for children attendance (Bennett, 2000: 25). Although TES are expected to visit preschools in order to provide advice, the teachers' unions say that the teachers view this inspection as predominantly supervisory; it was also suggested that many of the inspectors had little or no experience of pre-primary education (Bennett: 2000: 30).
1984-1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 40 teacher-educators are formed by the MIE, in collaboration with the help of friendly countries. Funded by the UNDP, UNICEF and the Government of Mauritius, the PPU offers a course prepared by the Teacher trainers to all preschool teachers. It is a 2-year programme for in-service teachers, and is a 400 contact-hour course. Approximately 3000 preschool teachers followed the course, which is approved by the MoE but not accredited.

⁴ (Sources: Bennett, 2000; Early Childhood Development, 2002; Ebbeck, 1997; Maudho, 21.6.06, pc; Maudho & Naeck, 2001; Reeda, 23.6.06, pc; UNESCO, 2006)

⁵ 'Below-classes' were classes which prepared Mauritian children to go directly to Standard 2

⁶ little schools.

1986-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF Country programme of Co-operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim is to lower IMR from 26.5 to 20 per 1000, establish resource centres, supply equipment and materials to train 1000 teachers, and set up pre-primary units in primary schools.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through its <i>Operational Plan for Teacher Education: Policies and Implementing Strategies</i> (1993) (mentioned in General Regulations for Teacher's Certificate (2003-2004: 3), the Ministry of Education and Science expressed its wish to improve teacher training and the quality of preschool education "to act as a lever towards the harmonisation of the teacher-learning process in a sector so vitally sensitive and crucial for the integration of the Mauritian child into the primary and later years."⁷ [my emphasis]
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching of the Teacher's Certificate offered to two batches of teachers.
1991-1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF Country programme of Co-operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim is to create more pre-primary units, make operational 9 regional training centres, each with a capacity of 360 teachers per year.
1996-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF Country programme of Co-operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on policy development, quality assurance, capacity-building.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regional directorates were opened in various parts of the island, to assist the <i>Directorate Pre-Primary</i> in its task. Each regional directorate has a staff of officers and clerks who are responsible for the pre-schools in the region.
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 1997 Education Act, in its Section 38, regulates the preschool sector. Preschools cannot be run unless they are registered and in conformity with this regulation. However, the regulation is technocratic, with attention to management and administrative issues with less focus on the child, his rights and needs. Moreover, in January 1997, the government introduced a subsidy of Rs 200 per month, per child above the age of four, in attendance of a 'registered' preschool (Maudho & Naeck, 2001: 22). The 1997 <i>Pre-Primary Curriculum</i> was produced and circulated.
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because of the academic qualifications of in-service teachers, and following a UNICEF-sponsored consultancy report (Ebbeck, 1997), the MIE and the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) were commissioned to draw up an in-service, distance learning course for preschool practitioners, who wished to gain a recognised qualification and who did not have the academic competencies to do the Teacher's Certificate.
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Proficiency for preschool teachers⁸ and assistants so as to allow them to follow the Teacher's Certificate course. The qualification is based on two years of intensive study, where students must submit course assignments, pass written exams in two areas of study and obtain a satisfactory assessment of their teaching practice, (Bennett, 2000:31). The plan of the government in 2000 was to extend the creation and development of pre-primary schools in most, if not all, government primary schools, in an effort to democratise education even further.
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2003 <i>Pre-Primary Curriculum Guidelines</i> came out.
2004-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to <i>l'Express</i> 30 June 2004, while in 2000, only 56% of preschool teachers had been trained, in 2004, 97% had some training. To date, some 1200 preschool teachers have been trained and according to Maudho (p.c., 21 June 2005), a fresh batch of some 550 preschool teachers is about to start the Teacher's Certificate. 99% of preschool teachers have taken a course in education (UNESCO, 2006: 33).
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new batch of preschool teachers has enrolled on the Teacher's Certificate course.

⁷ It is made clear in all the official documents that the role of pre-primary education includes preparing children for primary education.

⁸ In Mauritius, it is that case that unless preschool teachers have a derogation, they are expected to have a general education to the level of Cambridge School Certificate, and specific training for pre-primary teaching. Because of the numbers of derogation, many current teachers have low basic education, with only 30% having completed with a secondary education qualification. This low figure taken from a consultancy report (quoted in Bennett, 2000: 31) contradicts the figures released by the MIE on the qualifications of the preschool teachers enrolled on the new MIE courses. The MIE figures show that some 86% of the intake has the Cambridge School Certificate. I would suggest that this discrepancy can be explained by the fact that the consultancy report was talking about all preschool teachers, while the MIE figures refer to only those teachers enrolled on one of the accredited teacher training courses – one can imagine that it is qualified teachers who follow the teacher training courses.

E.2 The role of NGOs

The three major NGOs involved in pre-primary education in Mauritius are the BETHLEEM, L'OMEP and FPSP.

➤ BETHLEEM

Founded in 1975 as a project by Mrs France Boyer de la Giroday, Bethléem started as a school meant to prepare young girls and women to take care of their children, families and homes. Soon, the founder realised that with industrialisation, more and more women would go out to work, leaving their younger children in the care of older siblings or neighbours. She sent another project, consisting of the creation of a 'crèche' and a training centre for adults interested in childcare, to UNICEF. The UNICEF, in turn, sent experts in Mauritius, and then adopted the project because of its importance in a rapidly developing nation like Mauritius. In 1978, with the support of the Catholic church, a building was started and young people recruited to follow the course. Unlike other NGOs, which have been more passionately involved in the language issue, as will be discussed below, Bethléem has given priority to treating the child as a human being. (Paris-Davy, 23.6.06, pc., *Crèche Bethléem: 25 ans*).

➤ OMEP (Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Préscolaire)

L'OMEP, international organisation for Early Childhood Education (0-8 years), was created in 1948 in Prague. In 1972, the local branch of l'OMEP, the first NGO to devote itself to childhood education in Mauritius, was set up, with as main objectives (1) to promote early childhood education throughout the island and (2) to provide training to teachers in the sector. Until 2000, amongst its many claimed achievements, OMEP had trained over 1600 Mauritian teachers (Somoo Valayden, p.c.). The language policy supported by l'OMEP is the use of Kreol, French and English. Valayden defends the place of French in the pre-primary education sector because of its extended use in Mauritius.

➤ **Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP)**

Mrs Pushpa Lallah⁹ set up the first PLAYGROUP preschool in 1975. The Federation for PLAYGROUP Pre-schools (FPSP) was established in 1977, with the aim to:

- provide activities for children who were too young to go to primary school and for adolescents who were no longer at school (*Ensemble*, September 1977);
- provide pre-primary education that would prepare children for primary education, without putting undue pressure on them as was common in the then ‘ti l’écoles;’
- develop the oral skills and creativity of the children attending PLAYGROUP preschools.

FPSP has always defended mother tongue education (*Week-End*, 18 November 1979), and has given priority to English (rather than French) as the L2. For the FPSP, children should be:

- addressed in Kreol,
- allowed to speak in Kreol,
- taught to read and write in their mother tongue
- introduced to English for 10 minutes daily through the use of puppets, books, pictures, songs, poems and mime, at the age of four and a half;
- exposed to French and Bhojpuri through songs and poems.

FPSP gives precedence to English because it is the official language and an international language (*Le Défi*, 19 December 1987). It has voiced out its opposition to the use of French in preschools. In an open letter to ‘Le Nouveau Militant’ entitled ‘Why prefer French against English?’ (1989), FPSP explicitly refused to work in collaboration with l’OMEP because they have divergent opinions on the LiEP issue. For FPSP, the language policy adopted by l’OMEP favours French to the detriment of Kreol, thus creating an élite and being party to linguistic genocide (*Le Défi*, 15-21 April 1989).

FPSP has been very active in the educational field. It has:

⁹ Formed as a Playgroup leader in the UK and trained to take care of 3-5 year olds

- contributed to the 1979 Richards Commission and the 1982 Education Commission;
- sent a letter to the Director of the MIE, in 1988, complaining about the teachers' use of French in primary school, language which children could not understand (*The Star*, 8 January 1989);
- members in the Advisory Council of the Pre-Primary Unit (*Week-End Scope* 1- 7 September 1989);
- recently participated (through the presence of its president, Mrs Pushpa Lallah) in the writing up of the 2003 Pre-School Programme Guidelines;
- participated, through Mrs P. Lallah's contribution, in the 'Part 3: Curriculum Domains: Language Arts and Literacy Issues, Music' of the **Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education** teacher training course put together under the aegis of the Ministry of Education.

FPSP is also involved in teacher training, which is carried out in Kreol (*Horizon Nouveau*, 25 July – 1 August 1982) and with teacher trainers being made literate in Kreol so that they can teach literacy in Kreol to children. Mrs Lallah regularly publishes short stories in Kreol, with translations into English, aimed at young children.

E.3 Teacher training manuals

Table (6): Certificate of Proficiency in Early Childhood Education

	Title of booklet	Table of contents
P1	Part 1: Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is child development? • Elements/Domains of development • Theories of Development: Current theories and approaches to teaching and learning: information processing, constructivism, developmentally appropriate practice, traditional approach
P2	Part 2: Domains of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development: A definition • Physical and motor Development • Emotional Development • Social Development
P3	Part 2: Domains of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Development • Moral Development
P4	Part 3: Curriculum Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language Arts and Literacy Issues • Music

P5	Part 3: Curriculum Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Science • Mathematical Concept Development
P6	Part 3: Curriculum Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition and Health • Safety
P7	Part 3: Curriculum Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement and Physical Education • Creativity
P8	Part 4: Curriculum Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Practice • Pre-school Curriculum • Learning through Play • Classroom Environment and Management • Foundation Areas of Learning
P9	Part 5: Assessment and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment and Evaluation • Why observe? • Recording Observations • Respecting rights of children and their respective families
P10	Part 6: the Child in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and parental relations • Convention on the Rights of the child • Child abuse and neglect • Children with special needs • The exceptional child
P11	Evaluation Sheets and Activities	
	Contributors – from the MIE, NGOs	Prof Fred Ebbeck, J. C. Abel, V. Ballgobin, K. Bissonauth, S. Currimjee, J. Cunniapen, P. Davy, S. Dinnoo, N. Fanchette, P. Lallah, J. Lam Pak Hun, A. Luximon, N. Martineau, R. Maudho, D. Mungra, S. Muszynski, V. Naeck, R. Ramchurun, S. Ramkhelawon, R. K. Reedha, A. Soogali, C. Sooben, R. Veerasamy, P. Vyaporee

Table (7): Teachers' Certificate of Proficiency

C1	Module 1: Education Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles and Practices in early childhood Education • Some Theories and Theorists: Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Multiple Intelligence • Curriculum Models and Theories: Constructivism, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Reggio Emilia Approach, The Project Approach
C2	Module 2: Psychology: Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the pre-school-aged child • The child and the family system and the move to the pre-school • Children with special needs • Parallels between child development and curriculum • Observation techniques and instruments • Pulling it all together into a programme for pre-primary-aged children
C3	Module 3A: Early Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language acquisition: pre-linguistic phase, early words, grammar, bilingual children... • Language development: non-verbal, semantic, grammar, pragmatics • Language development in pre-schools: verbal communication, literature, teacher as story teller, reading, writing

C4	Module 3B: Language development: 4-7 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language and development: the child from 5-7 and 8 years old: reading for pre-school child, teaching of reading, whole word/whole language approach, phonic approach • Other factors affecting early childhood development: language and identity, creative expression, bilingualism, scaffolding [my emphasis]
C5	Module 4A: Mathematics Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do children learn their mathematics? • Mathematics and the pre-primary curriculum
C6	Module 4B: Mathematics Studies (4-7 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths teaching, Maths in the curriculum, Mannigel's concepts, patterns
C7	Module 5A: Environmental Studies, Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant life • Animal life • Other topics in Science for young children • Programming science • Technology
C8	Module 5B: Environmental Studies (the teacher and the environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The classroom teacher in early childhood settings • Working with parents and colleagues as a team
C9	Module 6: Creative, Aesthetic and Movement Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative and Aesthetic Development • Music movement and drama • Creativity in other areas of the pre-primary curriculum
C10	Module 7: Child Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and cleanliness • Health and hygiene • Child abuse and neglect
C11	Module 8: School based experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Responsibilities of teachers in the pre-school • Student preparation • Practice programme • Self evaluation • Curriculum programme
	Contributors – from the MIE	Bissessur, J., Curpen, A., Jahangeer, C., Manueal-Rosse, S., Mariaye, H., Maudho, R., Naeck, V., Nath-Varma, O., Paneeandy, S., Thaunoo, J., Venkatasamy, L.

Table (8): Extracts from the teacher training manuals

Source	Extract
P3: 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Language educators consider that the earlier a child learns to speak and read in his/her second language the more effective is the language learning."
P4: 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Oral language is the basis for all literacy. Preschools and the children's homes have a great responsibility in enhancing oral language [...] If we do not read to them regularly, share reading with them, make them feel how wonderful books are, appeal to their feelings and imagination, then such children may not become habitual readers."

P4: 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergent literacy and early childhood literacy programme. Emergent literacy and its implications. EL and cognitive development: "Oral language is the foundation upon which reading and writing are built up. Learning the meanings of thousands of words and developing an understanding of the way words are ordered to make sense (syntax) are extremely complex processes. These processes take place in oral language development and transfer to reading and writing [...] There is a strong relationship between listening and reading. Listening to stories is a vehicle for: expanding oral language, extending thinking skills, building vocabulary."
P4: 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story-telling: "It is best to use a language in which the children can more easily and naturally express themselves."
P4: 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of story: A very hot day (Story is in English)
C3: 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "What also has to be kept in mind is that if the child cannot use words well, cannot understand their meaning and cannot use them in phrases and sentences then he/she will have difficulty in reading. It is not a matter of 'chicken or egg': which comes first. It is very clear that the child's oral language must be achieved before reading skills will come."
C3: 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "It was generally agreed in your earlier work that you would not introduce formal reading activities in pre-primary, you would instead concentrate on making sure that the children were involved with as much 'reading' materials as possible. Your classroom should be a place where reading comes alive – that is it is a place where reading is meaningful to the child [...] When you write out the name of an object and place it next to the object [...] the children will learn to recognise the word and link it to the object."
C4: 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes distinction between two approaches to reading: whole language approach/phonics approach. "When beginning language experience work, it is essential that the teacher uses as nearly as possible the language of the children, keeping change to an absolute minimum as this is the language that the children will in turn 'read'."
C4: 32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Of course, in our pre-primary schools and primary schools, teachers are faced with children coming from homes where different languages are spoken. In pre-primary classes it is often the first time that the children have been exposed to another language in a formal and a structured way. Early childhood teachers have to be confident with their language and come to understand the children's language as much as possible. When teachers are hesitant with their own language and the language of instruction, this usually results in their becoming overly formal with language in the classroom."
C4: 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Where the child has to grasp the dominant language a heavy responsibility falls upon the teacher to begin to introduce and teach the dominant language. The problem for the teacher is to figure out the best way to do this. Should it be conversational or immersion (the totally new language only being used at pre-primary)? Or some combination of these? What the research has shown is that neither the full immersion programme nor second language teaching (eg English as a second language) is as effective as truly bilingual programmes. In such programmes, the child is given at least some of his/her basic instruction in his/her native language in the first year or two of school. At the same time the child is exposed to both languages in the same classroom. After several years of such combined instruction, the child makes a rapid transition to full use of the second language for all instruction." "In second/foreign language learning it is in the home language that children learn. A too early introduction of formalised learning of a second/foreign language before the child has gained his/her early language foundation in the home language could create learning problems for the child."

C4: 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Where the child has no grasp of the dominant language a heavy responsibility falls upon the teacher to begin to introduce and teach the dominant language. The problem for the teacher is to figure out the best way to do this. Should it be conversational or immersion (the totally new language only being used at the pre-primary) or some combination of these? What the research has shown, according to Bee (2000: 240), is that neither the full immersion programme nor second language teaching (eg English as a second language) is as effective as truly bilingual programmes. In such programmes, the child is given at least some of his/her basic instruction in his/her native language in the first year or two of school. At the same time the child is exposed to both languages in the same classroom, after several years of such combined instruction, the child makes a rapid transition to full use of the second language of instruction."
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APPENDIX F: Educational reports

Table (9): Extracts from education reports

OFFICIAL REPORT	Extracts from the Reports
Post Primary and Secondary Education in Mauritius. The Road Ahead. Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Post Primary and Secondary Sectors of Education. April 1978. Also known as the Glover Report .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We have just noted that the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs is now alive to the problem and proposes to take steps to control pre-primary education...It is necessary not only to exercise control over the type of school required for that purpose and to ensure that the teachers to whom those young children will be entrusted are of the right calibre, but also to regulate the contents of what those children will be taught with a view to providing a smooth transition to the primary stage. It seems to us that too much stress is laid on the teaching of two languages early on at the primary stage...On the other hand, the pre-primary period should, without being devoted to formal education of any kind, be spent in preparing the child for the primary stage so as to lessen the burden he will have to carry in Standard 1 and 2 and, at the same time, in trying to develop the child's creative and receptive skills." (p. 12)
White Paper on Education, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, June 1984.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among the objectives of the Government is to "Promote the extension of pre-primary schooling to cover as much as possible of the country. We believe that the <i>école maternelle</i> has a major role to play in improving the chances of children who might otherwise be disadvantaged by the system." (p. 7) • As part of the Programme of Action: Government proposes to accord high priority to the expansion of the system so that eventually pre-primary schools are available to all children. However, the government cannot finance its expansion but will support its development; Government will organise teacher training schemes to upgrade all infant teachers by July 1987; Government will run resource centres with supplies of teaching aids and materials; Government will make an inventory of the physical and human resources in pre-primary schools. (p. 9)
Education for Nation Building (1983-1987). A Silent Revolution. Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, August 1987.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A Pre-School Trust Fund was set up in 1984, to assist in promoting and providing preschool education and services in Mauritius especially to needy schools in rural areas." (p.5) • There are some 40000 children who attend 140 schools run by 2000 teachers, of whom nearly 1200 are trained. There are 34 pre-primary classes run by the Ministry, 8 regional centres to train teachers, one Resource Centre in Quatre-Bornes, and a Toy Library in Vacoas. There are some 370 self-employed teachers trained through workshops and seminars, exchanges with Réunion Island for 35 teachers visiting there, and assistance from France, India, Britain, UNICEF, UNDP, PTA. (p.5)

<p>Education: Its present state and future orientation. Ministry of Education, June 1988. Address by A. Parsuramen, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture on the occasion of the launching of the book Stepping into the Future to heads of schools and his talk on 'Education: Its Present State and Future Orientations' at the University of Mauritius, 16 June 1988.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "At pre-primary level, I intend to enforce regulations ensuring comfortable physical conditions for the children...The central task of improving quality in our schools must fall on teachers. Our teachers must be well trained and strongly motivated. As far as pre-primary schools are concerned, over a 1000 teachers have received in-service training." (p. 7)
<p>Citizens of tomorrow: Education in Progress. 1983-1989. Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 1990.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool education has a crucial role to play in the making of the citizens of tomorrow. Government accords a high priority to preschool education and related services. • The Government's objectives are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To extend pre-primary schooling to cover as much of the country as possible, priority to disadvantaged areas; (2) To improve infrastructure and equipment in preschools; (3) To provide training to preschool teachers; (4) To encourage community participation and sensitise parents to basic needs of children. • Government's salient activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A Pre-Primary Unit and the Preschool Trust Fund have been set up, (2) 50 pilot classes, 8 regional training centres, a main Resource Centre at Quatre-Bornes, (3) Some 40000 children attend 150 preschools, 2000 teachers of whom over 60% have had basic training, (4) More than 85% of 22000 children now going to preschool at age of 5, (5) NGOs and local authorities actively engaged in providing facilities for children and teacher training, (6) International agencies, UNDP, UNICEF, friendly countries have provided assistance and equipment, (7) Workshops and seminars by Indian and French experts to expose teachers to modern teaching methods, and (8) Network for regional co-operation and regular exchanges with Réunion have been established. • Future Programmes and Projects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To study the possibility for increase in assistance to 3-5 year olds, (2) To establish Pre-School Advisory Scheme and Mobile Unit for at-risk children and their families, (3) To create a National Institute of Early Child Care and Education...(p.1)
<p>Master Plan for the Year 2000: Main Proposals, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Mauritius, June 1991</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The pre-primary school [...] prepares them for the studies which they will undertake at primary school." (p.3) • "Training programmes will be organized for trainers of preschool teachers and for preschool teachers." (p.3)

<p>Master Plan for the Year 2000, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Mauritius, August 1991</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Pre-primary education is important to facilitate the preparation of young children for primary schools. This is a critical period for the young child during which the foundations of intellectual, socio-emotional and psychomotor development are laid. These schools are also important for developing oral expression, a sense of autonomy, a sense of aesthetics, for laying the foundation for literacy and numeracy, and for helping the child to develop basic human values." (p. 20) • Among the problems identified in the sector are: substandard buildings, children in rural areas have no access to pre-primary schools, the need to provide for children with disabilities. (p.23) • Proposals: the government will provide additional resources to NGOs, the MIE will offer a Certificate in Education for preschool educators; a curriculum will be prepared in such a way as to ensure continuity of teaching and learning between pre-primary and primary schools. (p.24)
<p>White Paper: Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education. Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, September 1997.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Pre-primary schools will continue to be built within our primary schools. Each school will be linked to a cluster of privately run kindergartens through an agreed curriculum based on the principle of early childhood development; the provision of pedagogical tools by the Ministry of Education will be a condition of such links." (p.21) • "Language policy is a very sensitive and very controversial issue, it arouses considerable passion and emotion. This is unfortunate – language must always foster Unity, not the contrary. We will not do justice to our endeavour if we do not address the issue of a language policy as a matter of urgency in an honest and sincere way. There is a need for a national consensus. It is proposed to update existing studies to establish whether we need some flexibility in our medium of instruction at classroom level; and to what extent our present approach to languages needs to be revised to live up to our national aspirations." (p. 29)
<p>Action Plan for a New Education System in Mauritius: Pre-School, Primary School, Middle School and College Education, Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, March 1998.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It says that the transition from the preschool section to the primary section in primary schools will be made as smoothly as possible. (p. 15) • "Rather than propose a formal curriculum, the objective will be to provide guidelines which will allow each school maximum flexibility to develop its own curriculum while adhering to a high standard of service....A good early childhood programme is essential to providing children with a 'head-start' for more formal education." (p. 113) • "Language and Literacy. Children learn to use language as they interact with others. They communicate by listening, speaking, reading and writing. The 'whole language' approach views these components of language as interrelated...The goal of education should be to support the home dialect while at the same time helping students gain a firm command of English and French. It is also interesting to note that FULL BILINGUAL programmes, in which the goal is full oral proficiency and literacy in both languages have been shown to have several advantages, including heightened cognitive flexibility and greater ability to analyse languages." (p. 114) • It also suggests daily, short term (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and long term planning (term, year), as well as the thematic approach. (p. 114) • Among the goals of early childhood education is mentioned the development of language and literacy skills.

APPENDIX G: 2003PPG

Table (10): Extracts from 2003PPG

Page No.	Extracts
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Educators should [...] provide [...] access to books showing different languages and cultures.”
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Educators should assist children to: [...] value their own cultural and linguistic background, value the cultural and linguistic background of others, appreciate different language greetings.”
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Expression and communication skills will first and foremost be developed, as far as possible, in the home language of the child. The latter will however gradually be introduced to and made familiar with the languages commonly used during primary schooling, through communicative and/or playful activities.”
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[Children] will be motivated to: use language to recall and recount experiences; use language to describe, analyse, question and emit hypotheses, become aware of the relationship between oral, written and visual texts, understand the functions of print, experiment with print, seek and engage in literacy experiences, use books and a variety of texts for pleasure and information.”
36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pre-school children must be given full opportunities [sic] to express their ideas and feelings freely in their environmental languages.”
37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The objectives of language development are to: stimulate the use of language, develop comprehensive skills, develop expressive skills, foster confidence, expose the child to other languages, develop the competencies to use language in varied situations, develop the skills to represent thoughts by oral words and written language, create the understanding that there is a precise connection between language, reading and writing.”
38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The pre-school educator should consider the following factors when dealing with language development: [...] communicate in a language that is being understood,... seize every opportunity to extend and enrich the child’s use of language...children should be made aware of and motivated in depicting and recognising written language so that they understand and appreciate that it carries a message and information...exposure through songs, poems, nursery rhymes, short stories, simple commands, word exposure, language(s) other than the child’s mother tongue.”
39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “There has [sic] to be books, which are linguistically, environmentally, hence culturally meaningful.”
40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If stories invented by educators and children are written down [...] reading from a book, which has been created on the spot, gets children to understand one of the purposes of written language.” • “A song in a different language can follow a story or a poem read in a language that most children understand. From an early stage children and adults play with language. When educators learn to play with languages in an aesthetic way, children are thus exposed to literature.” • “Since English is the official language throughout the education system, and English is the medium of instruction at a higher level of primary school, it is only logical that through songs or poetry, a child will learn some English daily in relation to the theme being worked on.” • “Illustrated books from different countries and television programmes show other countries’ [sic] social, natural, and cultural environment. If these are shown in an imaginative and interesting way, they will increase the children’s understanding and create a taste for learning and add to their knowledge of their immediate and broader national and international environment. Good preparation leads to habitual readers and independent learners.”

41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Writing and reading have to be learnt. In order to learn, children need to be motivated. Hence if at home or at pre-school the reasons for learning to be literate do not become evident, why then should a child want to learn to read and write? If a love for reading and writing is not shown to children, why should they want to learn these vital skills of modern living?" • "[Reading] involves initially, the sounding of letters and the forming of words from letters. Readiness for reading depends first of all upon the merging of different aspects of growth and experience such as basic neurological development, cognitive awareness, social maturity, and language skills." • "Readiness for reading depends on first of all upon the merging of different aspects of growth and experience such as basic neurological development, cognitive awareness, social maturity and language skills. In addition there are factors like understanding part-to whole relationships...In order to achieve these [visual and perceptual skills], the reading readiness skills are graded systematically according to the level of difficulty." • "If the children say what is taking place in the drawing, and this is written under their drawing, in their own precise words (without being subjected to an approximate translation by the educator), then the purpose of motivation for writing will be achieved."
42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...to develop reading readiness in children, [children need] good oral language skills including adequate vocabulary and proper articulation of sounds and words; conducive environments of pictures, prints, graphics and illustrations such as posters, newspapers, magazines..."
43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Children understand whole sentences in English if mime, action and puppet shows are used while reciting poems or singing. Children surrounded by storybooks, signs, alphabet blocks...do not need to be taught about letters. They will learn them, as they are ready...focus on print and pictures, for all children, must be meaningful, as in hearing stories read from a book, or seeing one's spoken words transformed to print."

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APPENDIX I: Guided questionnaire for PSA teachers

PART A: AT HOME

➤ Demographics

• Bio-data

Name:.....

Age:.....

Do you have children of your own? Yes/No

How many do you have? (Please indicate their age).....

• Educational background

CPE ☐ Lower secondary ☐

Sat for SC ☐ Passed SC ☐

Sat for HSC ☐ Passed HSC ☐

Any others? Specify

• Professional background – Please indicate the year in which you completed them

Playgroup ☐ Bethléhem ☐ OMEP ☐ PPU ☐
Montessori ☐ MIE Teacher Proficiency

☐ MIE Teachers' Certificate ☐ Any others? Please specify

• Work experience

For how long have you been a pre-school teacher?.....

Which schools have you worked at before?

.....

Which school are you presently working at?

➤ Your language and literacy practices at home

Which language (mention one only) do you usually use to speak to your:	
• Spouse?	
• Children?	
• Parents?	
• Brothers/sisters?	
• Friends?	
• Neighbours?	
• Colleagues at work?	

How often do you read the following:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often
• Books?			
• Newspaper?			
• Sales Ad?			
• Dictionary?			
• Recipes?			
• Shopping list?			

• A card?			
• Bills?			
How often:	Never	Sometimes	Often
• Do you read for pleasure?			
• Do you read for work?			
• Does your child see you write?			
• Do you buy books for your child?			
• Do you buy copybooks, crayons, pencils for your child?			
• Do you buy workbooks for your child?			
• Do you buy flash cards for your child?			
• Do you buy word charts for your child?			
• Do you buy CD-ROMS for your child?			

PART B: AT THE PRESCHOOL

➤ Language practices at school

What **language** do you **usually** use to address the children in class?

.....

Why?.....

...

In your opinion, are children exposed to the following languages at home?

	In oral form			In written form		
	Often	Sometimes	Never	Often	Sometimes	Never
Kreol						
English						
French						
Bhojpuri						
Oriental languages						

What language do the children **generally** and **usually** use to:

- Speak to you?.....
- Speak to each other?.....

Why do you think they use that language?

.....

Do any of the children ever use any English in class? Yes/No

If yes, when?

.....

➤ Literacy environment

Do you have materials related to literacy in your preschool? Yes/No

Please indicate/describe the KINDS of literacy materials available in your preschool?

Please estimate the number of children's books that are available in the preschool library:

None ☐ 1-20 ☐ 21-40 ☐ 41-60 ☐ more ☐ , please estimate:

In what language(s) are they?

.....
Name a few books that you tend to read to the children.....

For what purposes do you usually use the library books?

What would be the criteria you would use to choose books for the school library?

Do you ever write weekly plans and daily plans at school in front of the pupils?

Yes/No

What other types of literacy related activities do you carry out in front of the school children? (For example, writing a letter to request permission for leave, a shopping list...)

I have noted that when the children draw, you write the word and then make them copy the word. Why do you do that?

➤ Direct Instruction

Please answer the following questions truthfully, providing examples where indicated.

Do you:	Yes	No	How often in a week do you...			Please provide examples, where indicated
			Never	Sometimes	Often	
• Teach the alphabet?						
• Play alphabet games?						#
• Teach songs in English?						#
• Teach words in English?						#
• Teach colours in English?						#
• Teach shapes in English?						#
• Teach numbers in English?						#
• Teach the child to write letters?						#
• Teach the child to recognize the alphabet?						#
• Use ready-made work-books/sheets						#
• Teach the child to read words in English?						#
• Teach the child to write words in English?						#

Do you ever teach the child to respond in full English sentences? Yes/No

Please provide specific

examples:.....

Why do you feel it is important for the children to respond in full sentences?

.....
Explain and describe the **methods and activities** that you usually use to teach English (words and conversations) in the preschool classroom.

.....
Which **activity** do you think is most effective?

.....
Which activity do the children like most?

.....
Do you ever use English to communicate with the children? Yes/No

Why?

Do you include some English in the everyday daily-weekly lesson plan? Yes/No

Why? Why not?

I have noted that you teach the children English words by translating from French. Is there anyone who taught you how to teach English to young children?

➤ Book reading

How often do you tell a story to the school children in a typical week?

Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Daily ☐

Can you specify in which language you usually tell the school children a story?

.....
If you happen to pick up an English book from the library, please describe how you would read/tell the children the story.

➤ Beliefs

Here are some statements. Please indicate whether you agree, disagree or are unsure:

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Pre-school children are too young to be introduced to languages other than their mother tongue			
Pupils should be introduced to English in pre-primary school			
Pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from pre-primary school.			
Any Mauritian child is capable of learning English at pre-primary school			

Children from English medium schools are at an advantage compared to other children when they enter primary school			
It would be desirable to have Kreol as a medium of instruction throughout pre-primary and primary education			
Teachers should use only Kreol in pre-primary schools			

If you do teach English in your preschool programme, what are your aims and objectives?

.....
With respect to English, enumerate what you believe to be important for the preschool child to know before going to primary school and why?

.....
Are you for or against mixed abilities? Why?

.....
How would you feel if Kreol were made the main medium of instruction and the school children were taught to read and write in Kreol in primary school?

➤ **Teacher training course**

These questions are aimed at the accredited MIE/MCA teacher training courses.

Are you told what language to use in the preschool? Yes/No

What are you told?

Do you agree with this language policy? Yes/ No

Why? Why not?

Are you told whether to introduce English at pre-primary level? Yes/No

Do you agree with that?

Are you given any information on how to teach English at preschool? Yes/No

What kind of guidance are you given?

If you are not taught how to teach English, how do you know how to do it?

Do you think that English should be included as a compulsory subject/aspect in the pre-primary syllabus? Yes/No

Why? Why not?

.....
What do you understand by EMERGENT LITERACY?

.....
How do you put into practice your understanding of EMERGENT LITERACY in your daily/weekly activities?

.....
Do you teach the preschool children the alphabet using the traditional method?

Yes/No

Why?

APPENDIX J: Guided questionnaire for parents of PSA & PSB subjects

➤ Bio-Data

Name of your child:.....

How many children do you have?.....

	Mother	Father
How old are you?		
Number of years you were at school?		
Sat for SC?	Yes/No	Yes/No
Sat For HSC?	Yes/No	Yes/No
Technical/Vocational training?	Yes/No	Yes/No
University?	Yes/No	Yes/No
Do you work?	Yes/ No	Yes/No
What is your occupation?		

➤ Language profile

Which language (mention one only) do you usually use to speak to your:	
• Spouse?	
• Children?	
• Parents?	
• Brothers/sisters?	
• Friends?	
• Neighbours?	
• Colleagues at work?	

➤ Home Literacy Habits

Do you have books for adults at home? Yes/No

Please estimate the number of adult books that are available in the household:

None ☐ 1-20 ☐ 21-40 ☐ 41-60 ☐ more ☐, please estimate-

In what language(s) are they?.....

Name a few if you can:.....

Do you have children's books at home? Yes/No

Please estimate the number of children's books that are available in the household:

None ☐ 1-20 ☐ 21-40 ☐ 41-60 ☐ more ☐, please estimate_____

In what language(s) are they?.....

Name a few if you can:.....

How often do you read the following:			
	Never	Sometimes	Often
• Books?			
• Newspaper?			
• Sales Ad?			
• Dictionary?			
• Recipes?			
• Shopping list?			
• A card?			
• Bills?			

How often:	Never	Sometimes	Often
• Do you read for pleasure?			
• Do you read for work?			
• Does your child see you write?			
• Do you buy books for your child?			
• Do you buy copybooks, crayons, pencils for your child?			
• Do you buy workbooks for your child?			
• Do you buy flash cards for your child?			
• Do you buy word charts for your child?			
• Do you buy CD-ROMS for your child?			

Please circle the number that you think best describes you and your child's behaviour:
My child goes to the library: 1 (never) 2 (seldom) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very often)

➤ **Direct Instruction**

Please answer the following questions truthfully, providing examples where indicated.

➤ **Indirect Instruction**

How often do you, or other members of the family, tell a story to your child in a typical week?

At bed time

Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Daily ☐

Other times

Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Daily ☐

Can you specify in which language you usually tell your child a story?

How often do you, or other members of the family, read to your child in a typical week?

At bed time

Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Daily ☐

Other times

Never ☐

Sometimes ☐

Often ☐

Daily ☐

Can you specify in which language you usually read your child a story?

➤ **Beliefs & Expectations**

Do you know whether your child does any English at pre-school? Yes/No

Do you hear your child sing songs in English? Yes/No

Examples: _____

Do you hear your child say words in English? Yes/No

Examples: _____

Do you hear your child say sentences in English? Yes/No

Examples: _____

Would you wish your child to be taught some English at preprimary level? Yes/No

WHY?

Do you think that doing some English at preschool will help your child in primary school? Yes/No

Why?

Do you expect preschool teachers to teach your child:	Yes	No
• The alphabet?		
• Songs?		
• Songs in English?		
• Words in English?		
• Colours?		
• Colours in English?		
• Shapes?		
• Shapes in English?		
• Numbers?		
• Numbers in English?		
• To write?		
• By using ready-made work-books?		
• To read words in French?		
• To read words in English?		
• To write words in French?		
• To write words in English?		
• By reading books to your child?		
• How often?		

How would you feel if Kreol were made the main medium of instruction and your children were taught to read and write in Kreol in primary school?

.....

Here are some statements. Please indicate whether you agree, disagree or are unsure:

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
Pre-school children are too young to be introduced to languages other than their mother tongue			
Pupils should be introduced to English in pre-primary school			
Pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from pre-primary school.			
Any Mauritian child is capable of learning English at pre-primary school			
Children from English medium schools are at an advantage compared to other children when they enter primary school			
It would be desirable to have Kreol as a medium of instruction throughout pre-primary and primary education			
Teachers should use only Kreol in pre-primary schools			

APPENDIX K: Assessment criteria and assessor's report

K.1 Assessment criteria

Table (11): Assessment criteria to assess oral English proficiency at Form 5 level

Reading Aloud	
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads the passage with near perfect pronunciation and very clear articulation • Reads with fluency and good pace • Varies the pitch and tone in order to convey the information, idea and feelings in a passage
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally clear articulation with occasional errors in pronunciation • A mainly fluent reading with perhaps some stumbles • Some variation of pitch and tone for expressive effect, but not always appropriate to the passage
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation of some words is rather inaccurate, but some attempt made to maintain clarity of articulation • Reading is hesitant or jerky with occasional stumbles • A slight attempt to achieve expressiveness through variation of pitch and tone • Uses largely inappropriate variations
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very weak pronunciation and little clarity of articulation • Very hesitant reading, full of errors • Reads in a monotone or with inappropriate tones
Picture Discussion	
13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes detailed observations • Combines these intelligently with explanations and interpretations • Uses a wide and suitable range of vocabulary and structures • Develops the description coherently and satisfactorily on any aspect of the picture
9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes observations on the picture • Links these with explanations and interpretation • Uses an adequate range of appropriate vocabulary and structures • Describes fairly coherently, though some ideas may be thrown in as afterthoughts
5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes picture superficially • Makes some attempt to link this with explanation and interpretation • Uses a basic, or somewhat inappropriate, vocabulary and simple structures • Describes picture with little coherence
1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description is inadequate • Interprets with little awareness of what is happening • Uses very limited, or inappropriate, vocabulary and structures are faulty • Requires constant prompting
Conversation	
13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives and develops intelligent personal responses to the theme • Expresses and develops ideas clearly, succinctly and naturally, using appropriate vocabulary and structures • Shares ideas and opinions with the examiner, introducing new ideas or initiating discussion of relevant issues
9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers some personal responses to the theme, with some elaboration • Is generally clear and coherent, using largely appropriate vocabulary and structures • Responds well to the examiner's prompts, but shows less initiative
5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives simple personal responses with little development • Makes disjointed comments which may be unclear, but with some attempt to use appropriate vocabulary and structures • Depends heavily on the examiner for encouragement and prompting
1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers hardly any personal response or development • Offers ideas in disconnected single sentences, phrases or even single words • Finds it difficult to maintain any sustained interaction, even with repeated prompting

K.2 Assessor's report

TO: Mrs. M. Aulecar Owodally
FROM: Miss V. Dabydoyal
DATE: 17 November 2005

Re: Assessment of candidates for English Oral

Dear Madam,

As requested, I have assessed the English Oral performance level of three candidates according to the assessment criteria used for the Cambridge O-Level English Oral Examinations. It is to be noted that the assessment is of the tape recorded performance of the candidates.

Candidate A

Reading (4 marks): The candidate was indeed very careful not to stumble and to make mistakes and therefore opted for a slow reading. With the lack of fluency, there was also hardly any variation of pitch and tone which would normally help convey meaning. There were errors in pronunciation although the effort to maintain clarity of articulation was obvious.

Picture Discussion (6 marks): Superficial description with very limited interpretation and even the physical description of the persons was basic and inadequate. The vocabulary was rather limited and the candidate very quickly shifted from the picture.

Conversation (6 marks): Very limited vocabulary with faulty sentence structure and extensive use of Mauritian Creole. Although the candidate was quite motivated to share personal experience, she could not express her ideas coherently.

Candidate B

Reading (5 marks): The candidate was more or less comfortable with the reading although there were quite a few stumbles and errors. Variation of pitch and tone was limited but there was some attempt to convey meaning.

Picture Discussion (8 marks): There was some description but it was superficial and the candidate did not really go much into the interpretation of the scene. With a limited vocabulary and basic structure, the candidate made a constant effort to describe although in a disjointed way. That is why she cannot go in the second band of the assessment criteria..

Conversation (9 marks): Candidate gives personal response with some elaboration, but is limited due to the basic structure and inadequate vocabulary. She does go beyond the third band, but cannot get more than 9 marks due to the vocabulary and structure used.

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University of Cape Town

APPENDIX L: Raw data from parents' interviews (PSA & PSB)

L.1 Demographic details of PSA & PSB subjects

Table (12): Bio-data of the children involved in the main 2005 study

Name of children	Birthday	Number of siblings	Mother Education Profession	Father Education Profession	Number of days at school (PSA: 148; PSB: 144)
Vash (A-M)	January 2000 (5)	2	SC Secretary	University Statistician	145
Yad (A-M)	June 2000 (4.7)	1	SC Pharmacy worker	SC Forest Guard	140
Ajm (A-M)	July 2000 (4.6)	1	CPE Housewife	CPE Baker	141
Kus (A-M)	February 2000 (4.9)	1	HSC Secretary	HSC Policeman	142
Jab (A-M)	March 2000 (4.10)	4	Form 2 Madrassah teacher	CPE Mowlana	132
Mev (A-F)	August 2000 (4.5)	2	Form 4 Housewife	CPE Self-Employed	144
Kar (A-F)	January 2000 (5)	1	Form 4 Housewife	Form 4 Driver	116
Gir (A-F)	March 2000 (4.10)	1	CPE Housewife	Form 3 Driver	139
Sar (A-F)	April 2000 (4.9)	1	HSC Teacher	HSC IT	139
Chas (A-F)	August 2000 (4.5)	0	CPE Factory worker	Form 5 Factory worker	127
Kish (A-F)	November 2000 (4.2)	4	CPE Housewife	Form 3 Shop worker	131
Sev (A-F)	December 2000 (4.1)	3	Form 1 Housewife	Form 3 Factory worker	142
Mel (A-F)	October 2000 (4.3)	1	Form 5 Factory worker	CPE Factory worker	122
Dan (B-M)	February 2000 (4.11)	2	CPE Housewife	CPE Driver	130
Alex (B-M)	March 2000 (4.10)	1	Form 3 Maid	HSC Foreman	138
Avi (B-M)	June 2000 (4.7)	1	Form 4 Temporary work in crèche	Form 3 Factory worker	135

Rah (B-M)	May 2000 (4.8)	3	HSC Civil Servant	University Auditor	115
Zuh (B-M)	November 2000 (4.2)	2	Std 4 Maid	Form 1 Carpenter	128
Iza (B-M)	August 2000 (4.5)	1	SC Housewife	Sc Mechanic	138
Yus (B-F)	March 2000 (4.10)	4	Form 3 Housewife	CPE Works at fuel pump	128
Zak (B-F)	July 2000 (4.6)	2	SC Nurse	Bus Supervisor	136
Pooj (B-F)	June 2000 (4.7)	1	HSC Secretary	HSC+ ACCA Accountant	129
Zul (B-F)	August 2000 (4.5)	3	CPE Housewife	CPE Shop worker	141
Kum (B-F)	November 2000 (4.2)	1	CPE Housewife	CPE Mason	142
Aisha (B-F)	December 2000 (4.1)	0	CPE Factory worker	CPE Mason	138
Waj (B-F)	March 2000 (4.10)	4	CPE Dressmaker	CPE Mason	137
Hum (B-F)	February 2000 (4.11)	2	Form 2 Housewife	Form 4 Driver	129
Ame (B-F)	January 2000 (5)	1	CPE Housewife	CPE Driver	140

(A-M: PSA-Male, A-F: PSA-Female, B-M: PSB-Male; B-F: PSB-Female)

Table (13): Family background of the children from PSA & PSB

	PSA (n=13)			PSB (n=15)		
	Boys (n=5)	Girls (n=8)	Mean	Boys (n=6)	Girls (n=9)	Mean
Number of children in the family	3.4	2.5	2.8	2.7	3	2.9
Position of the test subject	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.3
Age of mother	35.8	29.1	34.4	34	32.4	33.1
Age of father	42.6	36.4	38.8	38.3	38.3	38.3
Mother - Number of years at school	9.8	8.6	9	8.8	7.8	8.3
Father – Number of years at school	10.4	8.5	9.7	10.3	8.1	9

L.2 Language background of PSA & PSB children

Table (14): Language behaviour of PSA & PSB parents

	PSA	PSB
Language spoken with:		
➤ Spouse	10K, 1 K/F, 1 K/F/E, 1 F/E(secretcy)	15 K, 1K/E (secretcy)
➤ Children	7K, 5 K/F, 1F	7K, 8 KKC/F
➤ Parents	11K, 2 K/B	11K, 2K/F, IE
➤ Brothers/Sisters	11K, 1 K/E, 1 F	11K, 3 K/F
➤ Friends	11K, 2 K/F	13K, 2 K/F
➤ Neighbours	12 K, 1 B	14K, 1K /F
➤ Preschool teacher	5K, 3K/F, 5F	10K, 4 K/F, 1F

K: Kreol; F: French; E: English; B: Bhojpuri

➤ Brief data analysis

- **Children in the family:** The number of children ranged between 1 and 5, with a mean of 2.8 (PSA)/2.9 (PSB) children per family. The average position of the children-subjects is second, thus indicating that many of the subjects have older siblings. Given that education is compulsory till 16, older siblings can potentially play the role of the 'knowledgeable' other(s);
- **Parents' age:** The mothers' age ranged between 25 and 45 with a mean of 34.4 (PSA)/33.1(PSB), while the fathers' age ranged between 29 and 53 with a mean of 38.8 (PSA)/38.3 (PSB);
- **Parents' educational background:** On average, mothers spent 9 (PSA)/8.3 (PSB) years at school, and fathers 9.7(PSA)/9 (PSB) years at school, indicating that most parents have had education up till lower secondary level.¹⁰ This suggests that the two groups of parents tend to be literate and fairly educated;
- **Parents' professional background:** Apart from 7 couples (4 from PSA and 3 from PSB) having white-collar jobs,¹¹ most parents have working class jobs¹² and 13 mothers are housewives. This places the

¹⁰ A finer look at the schooling of the parents indicates that out of the 28 mothers and 28 fathers, one parent stopped at Std 4 level, 21 stopped after Std 6, 16 reached lower secondary education, 15 reached upper secondary, and 3 had post secondary education.

¹¹ Secretary, auditor, nurse, supervisor, accountant, statistician, pharmacy clerk, policeman, primary school teacher, IT manager.

¹² Baker, *mowlana*, *madrasah* teacher, driver, factory worker, maid, carpenter, mechanic, mason, babysitter, dressmaker.

children in this project as working class families, living in very modest situations.

The above data confirm the comparability of the two groups of children involved in this study, in terms of socio-economic background.

L.3 PSA & PSB parents' reading habits

Table (15): Parents' reading habits

In % (raw number)	PSA (n=13)			PSB (n=15)		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Never	Sometimes	Often
Do you read:						
• Books?	61 (8)	15 (2)	23 (3)	53 (8)	27 (4)	13 (2)
• Newspaper?	8 (1)	61 (8)	31 (4)	27 (4)	53 (8)	20 (3)
• Sales Ad?	15 (2)	85 (11)	0	47 (7)	33 (5)	20 (3)
• Dictionary?	38 (5)	61 (8)	0	47 (7)	47 (7)	7 (1)
• Recipes?	31 (4)	61 (8)	8 (1)	47 (7)	47 (7)	7 (1)
• Shopping List?	38 (5)	54 (7)	8 (1)	40 (6)	53 (8)	7 (1)
• Card?	46 (6)	38 (5)	8 (1)	53 (8)	47 (7)	0
• Bills?	92 (12)	8 (1)	0	100 (15)	0	0
• For pleasure?	46 (6)	31 (4)	8 (1)	47 (7)	27 (4)	7 (1)
• For work?	85 (11)	8 (1)	8 (1)	93 (14)	7 (1)	0

Note: Two parents from each of the two preschool said that they read for information and to learn.

Table (16): Newspaper reading in Mauritius from the SOFRES poll

N=183 Results in percentage	L'Express (daily, morning)	Le Mauricien (daily, afternoon)	Le Matinal (daily, morning)
Men	64	56	10
Women	62	46	10
AGE:			
18-24 (n=39)	75	40	5
25-34 (n=44)	53	47	8
35-44 (n=47)	69	60	13
45-59 (n=40)	57	59	11
60 and more (n=13)	61	58	19
SALARY SCALE:			
Rs 6000 or less (n=24)	73	47	5
Rs 6001-10000 (n=48)	61	47	-
Rs 10001-14000 (n=25)	60	41	31
Rs 14001-20000 (n=34)	64	54	17
Rs 20000 or more (n=52)	62	63	7

Note: The newspapers are written in French

L.4 Parents' activities: direct instruction

Table (17): Direct instruction at home

In % (raw number)		PSA (n=13)		PSB (n=15)	
	Do you:	Yes	No	Yes	No
Li	▪ Teach alphabet?	100 (13)	0	100 (15)	0
La	▪ Teach songs?	69 (9)	31 (4)	40 (6)	60 (9)
La	▪ Teach songs in English?	46 (6)	54 (7)	33 (5)	67 (10)
La	▪ Teach words in English	85 (11)	15 (2)	87 (13)	13 (2)
La&Li	▪ Use flash cards?	31 (4)	69 (9)	27 (4)	83 (11)
La	▪ Teach colours?	92 (12)	8 (1)	93 (14)	7 (1)
La	▪ Teach colours in English?	69 (9)	31 (4)	83 (11)	27 (4)
La	▪ Teach shapes?	92 (12)	8 (1)	83 (11)	27 (4)
La	▪ Teach shapes in English?	85 (11)	15 (2)	67 (10)	33 (5)
La	▪ Teach numbers?	100 (13)	0	93 (14)	7 (1)
La	▪ Teach numbers in English?	92 (12)	8 (1)	80 (12)	20 (3)
Li	▪ Teach child to write?	85 (11)	15 (2)	87 (13)	13 (2)
La&Li	▪ Use ready-made workbook?	54 (7)	46 (6)	53 (8)	47 (7)
	▪ Read words in French?	31 (4)	69 (9)	47 (7)	53 (8)
Li	▪ Read words in English?	31 (4)	69 (9)	47 (7)	53 (8)
	▪ Write words in French?	31 (4)	69 (9)	40 (6)	60 (9)
Li	▪ Write words in English?	31 (4)	69 (9)	47 (7)	53 (8)

Li: Literacy; La: Language

Table (18): What do parents teach, when they teach English to their children?

Aj (PSA)	• Cat, door
Mev (PSA)	• Parts of the body • Std 1 textbooks
Giri (PSA)	• Boy, man, box
Sar (PSA)	• Bird, book • Picture book
Sev (PSA)	• Days of the week
Mel (PSA)	• Table, chair, parts of the body
Avi (PSB)	• Milk, 'Ki to pé drink?' , "What is this?"
Zul (PSB)	• Broom, television, pencil, • picture chart

L.5 Parents' activities: indirect instruction

Table (19): Types of children's books in homes (PSA & PSB)

Type of books	Comments
Picture books	• 2 mothers (from PSB) claimed having books on different themes, which were the same themes that preschool teachers explore in the yearly plan, hence indicating an academic slant to the books parents buy for their children. These are imported from India and available at cheap prices in local bookshops.
Story books	• 10 mothers (6 from PSA, 4 from PSB) mentioned having storybooks at home. Although parents claimed to have both English and French books, when they were asked to give book titles, they gave French

	classic titles: <i>Les Trois Petits Cochons</i> , <i>Pinocchio</i> , <i>Cendrillon</i> , <i>Blanche Neige</i> , and <i>Alladin</i> . One mother did mention having English storybooks, but could not remember the book title.
School books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 mothers (2 from PSA, 3 from PSB) mentioned having their older children's schoolbooks at home. It is interesting to see that they conceive schoolbooks as being children's books, again indicating the academic slant to literacy related activities. From the interviews, it appears that mothers keep older children's schoolbooks for later use by younger children even though in Mauritius, all children going to Government primary schools are given school textbooks free of charge at the beginning of each academic year as part of the policy of making education accessible to all. One mother mentioned having already bought the Std1 books for her child, which she would go through during the summer holidays preceding her child's entry into Std1. One of the mothers mentioned having kept her own schoolbooks which taught reading French using the syllabic method, and which she now used with her child.
Alphabet books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'ABCD' books is how the parents (4 mothers: 3 from PSA, 1 from PSB) call this type of book which they buy for their children.
Colouring books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was interesting to note that parents (4 mothers: 2 from PSA, 2 from PSB) conceived colouring books, which contain no writing but only pictures, as books for children.
Encyclopaedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One mother (PSA) mentioned having invested in a children's encyclopaedia.

Table (20) : (PSA/PSB) Mothers' views about the functions of reading

Name of child	Mothers' comments
Yad (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be read to three times a week, as there are other things to do
Aj (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will make them better It will relax them
Jab (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop them
Tar (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When they finish their work and have nothing to do, the teacher can tell them stories
Gir (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To rest
Sar (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers should not do only that
Kish (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To relax them
Sev (PSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To show them what life is about
Avi (PSB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the children are tired
Zak (PSB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop their love of reading and their interest in reading

L.6 Parents' belief and expectations

Table (21): Parents' beliefs and expectations

In % (raw number)	PSA (n=13)			PSB (n=15)		
	YES	UNS	NO	YES	UNS	NO
Do you:						
• Know if your child does Eng at pp?	92 (12)	8 (1)		80 (12)		20 (3)
• Hear your child sing English songs?	92 (12)		8 (1)	87 (13)		13 (2)
• Hear your child say English words?	92 (12)		8 (1)	93 (14)		7 (1)
• Hear your child say English sentences?	54 (7)		46 (6)	73 (11)		27 (4)
• Wish your child be taught English at pp?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Think Eng in pp will help your child in primary school?	100 (13)			87 (13)	13 (2)	
Do you expect preschool teachers to:						
• Teach alphabet?	100 (13)			87 (13)		13 (2)
• Teach songs?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach songs in English?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach words in English?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Use flash cards?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach colours?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach colours in English?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach shapes?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach shapes in English?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach numbers?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach numbers in English?	100 (13)			100 (15)		
• Teach your child to write?	100 (13)			93 (14)		7 (1)
• Use ready-made workbook?	100 (13)			80 (12)		20 (3)
• Read words in French?	77 (10)		23 (3)	80 (12)		20 (3)
• Read words in English?	77 (10)		23 (3)	80 (12)		20 (3)
• Write words in French?	77 (10)		23 (3)	73 (11)		27 (4)
• Write words in English?	77 (10)		23 (3)	73 (11)		27 (4)
• Read books to your child?	92 (12)		8 (1)	87 (13)	7 (1)	7 (1)
• How often in a week?	3.25			2		
	Agree	UNS	Disag.	Agree	UNS	Disag.
• Preschool children are too young to be introduced to languages other than their mother tongue.	8 (1)		92 (12)		7 (1)	93 (14)
• Pupils should be introduced to English in pre-primary school	100 (13)			100 (15)		

• Pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from pre-primary school	100 (13)			87 (13)	13 (2)	
• Any Mauritian child is capable of learning English at pre-primary level	100 (13)			60 (9)	13 (2)	27 (4)
• Children from English medium schools are at an advantage compared to other children	54 (7)	23 (3)	23 (3)	47 (7)	27 (4)	27 (4)
• It would be desirable to have Kreol as medium of instruction throughout pp and primary education	8 (1)		92 (12)	20 (3)	20 (3)	60 (9)
• Teachers should use only Kreol in pre-primary schools			100 (13)			100 (15)

Table (22): Parents' motivation for their children to learn English

Motivations to have children learn English	Emerging codes	Name of students	
		PSA	PSB
Instrumental	• Develop and progress	Jab, Han	Dan, Pooj, Waj
	• Future educational and professional success	Kus, Aj, Sar, Kish	Alex, Yus, Kum, Waj
	• Can understand cartoons and read books	Yad, Tar	Pooj
	• International language		Zak, Yus
	• There is more English than French at school – preparation for Standard 1	Vast, Yad, Mev, Gir,	Alex, Avi Rah, Iz, Zak, Ame
	• The younger the better	Vash , Tar, Sev	Hum
Integrative	• Go abroad/Talk to foreigners	Aj, Alex, Sar	Dan
	• Mother likes the language	Sev	Alex

APPENDIX M: Yearly and weekly plans

M.1 Yearly plan

Main Areas of Intervention

- Physical Development
 - Gross motor development
 - Fine motor development
- Communication
 - Verbal
 - Non-Verbal
- Cognitive Development
- Sensory Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Creative Development

Objectives of the preschool centre

- To enable the child
 - To discover the world around him through his senses and the medium of play
 - To develop his language so that he can express himself in order to communicate with others
 - Enjoy the satisfaction of solving problems and learning new skills
 - Appreciate and enjoy his culture through songs, dances, stories, riddles, etc...
 - To develop and express his creative faculty
 - To identify children's handicaps at an early stage and arrange for remedial programme
 - To enable smooth transition from pre-primary to primary
 - To provide care for the children
 - To encourage parental involvement in school activities

Competencies and Skills to be developed

- Gross motor development
 - Walking, running, jumping, hopping
- Fine motor development
 - Scribbling, drawing, threading, colouring, modelling
- Communication
 - Oral expression, facial expression, role play, story-telling, riddles, etc...
- Cognitive development
 - Introduction of mathematical concepts such as colour, size, length, weight, thickness, etc...
 - Introduction to space
 - Sorting, classifying and identifying letter words and pictures
 - Formation of letters and words
 - Association of language and print
 - Reasoning, setting hypothesis, experiences, verification and interpretation of results
- Sensory development
 - Differentiation materials, objects, and sounds
 - Sorting materials
 - Screening materials
 - Selecting materials
 - Music
- Creative Development
 - Drawing, cutting, pasting, weaving, threading, different techniques of painting
- Social and Emotional Development
 - Walking in groups, sharing, role play, respecting each other, love, care for others, wait for turn, listen to others, self-discipline, self-confidence, co-operation

Themes to be explored

First Term

- Socialisation
 - Child self-awareness/hygiene
 - Water, house, school
 - Climate: rain, wind, sun, cloud

Second Term

- Family occupation
- Vegetables – things that grow
- Flowers
- Trees/Fruits

Third Term

- Transport
- Animals
- Seaside

Celebrations

- Independence
- Easter
- Divali
- Christmas

M.2 Sample of weekly plans in PSA**Date: 4 – 8 April****Theme: WATER**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Language	On water	Uses of water	Importance of water	What do we do with water?	Substances that dissolve in water
Drawing	Free	Uses of water	Lake, reservoirs	Bottle full of water	The experience
Maths	Introduce No. 2	Sorting 2 objects	Grouping 2 objects	Copy no. 2	Draw 2 glasses of water
Reading/ Writing	Introduce letter 'e'	Copy letter 'e'	Ring letter 'e'	Functional literacy	Library corner
Creative Art	Paper folding	Modelling	Paper batik	Transfer painting	Paper folding of boats

Date: 19 – 23 September**Theme: FRUITS**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Language	Introduce theme of fruits	Name fruits	Name fruit trees you have at your place	Name fruits you like	Where do we get fruits
Drawing	Free drawing	Draw fruits	Draw fruit trees	Draw fruits you like to eat	Observe and draw fruits
Maths	Introduce no. 9	Sorting of 9 objects	Grouping of 9 objects	Draw 9 strawberries	Sets of 9
Reading/Writing	Library corner	Copy words 'les fruits'	Copy surnames	Copy words 'une fraise'	Ring words identic [sic] to model
Creative Art	Modelling of fruits	Draw, colour and cut fruits	Paint fruits	Pasting on an apple	Printing

APPENDIX N: Raw data (teacher questionnaires/interviews and observations)

N.1 Teachers' appreciation of the teacher training course

PSA Teachers	Comment
T1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The course was too theoretical and not practical enough. We need to be shown how to put all this theory into practice.
T2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MIE courses are far too theoretical. A lot of what we have learnt and do come from the PPU course.
T3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MIE courses do little more than develop the technical vocabulary.

These reactions were echoed in the responses of the teachers from the pilot: of the 15 teachers who were given the questionnaire, 9 responded to the question and they all said that the MIE teacher training course lacked a practical component. One teacher (P3) even suggested that the Teacher training course should include a language course for teachers so as to bring all the preschool teachers to the same language proficiency level.

N.2 Preferred language of communication in preschools visited

Asked what language they usually use to address the children in class during the interview, PSA teachers voiced out their preference for Kreol and French as the languages they use to communicate with the children.

Teacher	Comment
T1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French, because it is an L2 in Mauritius. The children already know Kreol and French is closer to Kreol, so it is easier to teach them this L2. We begin to introduce French in pre-primary, in view of its more extensive use in primary. There is no parental request, but it is the usual practice to use French with children. When we use French, there is no mixing with other languages. We need to teach a language to a child well. Parents mix French and Kreol, and thus spoil children's language learning process.

- T2
- French, and sometimes Kreol, so that children learn new words. Moreover, parents are happy to hear children speak French, although they do not request French to be spoken to them.
- T3
- I use French and Kreol. French resembles Kreol. The PPU course taught us songs and poems to use with the children to introduce them to English and French. The MIE did not add on to that knowledge.

Table (23): Field notes from the pilot study on preferred language of communication

School	Date	Field notes
SVR	28.6.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers use predominantly French with the children when addressing them in the classroom and on the playground. Even when talking about the day's theme, - the sea – they used mostly French. Sometimes code-switch to Kreol, but very rarely during the day. Hindi was used with a child who is an Indian expatriate. Children use both French and Kreol with the teacher, and both French and Kreol with their friends. There seems to be very comfortable code-switching for some of the children. When the children speak French, there is interference from Kreol.
PGS	2.7.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since Kreol is the language of the environment, students should as much as possible be introduced to languages of the school. In this school, there is parental pressure to use French, despite the fact that the majority have Kreol as a home language. Teacher says that she is against the use of Kreol for story telling as she associates Kreol with vulgarity.
	5.7.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class management is usually in French. When children do not understand or do not respond, teachers switch to Kreol.
MLP	6.7.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the teachers, the students tend to use French. Teachers often tell students not to use Kreol. Teachers are requested by parents to avoid using Kreol at school.

PGS	13.7.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlike other schools, in this school teachers say that parents do not put pressure on the language that the teachers should use with the children. The teachers thus easily swap from Kreol to French. Although it would appear that the children understand both, they seem to feel more comfortable with using Kreol with their teachers and their friends.
AB	16.7.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School near a cité.¹³ One of the 4 year olds had never been sent to school and this was his first year at pre-school- the little boy cannot even hold a pen properly and cannot make a letter or a number. One of the teachers said that in this area, many children had not seen crayons before coming to school, and that the first time the teacher put a basket of crayons on the table, some children were actually scared. In this school, most children are Kreol speakers. Many of the children are not very articulate, but they understand when they are spoken to. Even when they are addressed in French, they show understanding, but they use only Kreol with teachers and with friends.
BS	22. 9.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use mostly French with the children. Children are from lower middle class homes and it is observed that they use Kreol amongst themselves. However, teachers tend to address them in French and code-switch to Kreol if they show that they have not understood or if they do not respond.
ER	28.9.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although children come from lower class families, and this is seen in their apparent poverty – the food that they bring - one of the three teachers uses French consistently, while the other two use more Kreol to speak to the children.

N.3 Teachers' aims/objectives when teaching English

- (PSA) Teacher Interview: What are your aims when teaching English?

Teacher Aims

- T1
- To teach them the L3. The main reason is that when they see the Std 1 books, English will not be new to the children, especially since in Mauritius English is used from Std 1 onwards.

¹³ Cités are areas, with cheap lodging, which were made built for poor people who had lost their houses in the cyclone in 1960.

- T2
 - To teach them words in English so that they can write the words. Oral language will help written language develop.
- T3
 - To learn English words so as to develop language. When they will hear the words, they will sound familiar.

- (PSA) Teacher Interview: With respect to English, enumerate what you believe to be important for the preschool child to know before going to primary school and why?

Teacher Objectives

- T1
 - Body parts, name, gender, some words (mother, father, basic words, Maths words, shapes)
- T2
 - Basic words which describe things that they see everyday, as well as colours, shapes and numbers (1-10)
- T3
 - Easy words: basket, bag, table, chair. Things that they know and see.

- Pilot study: Teachers' aims when including English in the weekly/daily plan

Teacher Comments

- PH1
 - To help them get accustomed to the English language
- PH2
 - Children get used to speaking English
- PH3
 - To understand language
- SVR1
 - To enable the child to be familiar with English words
- SVR2
 - To enable the child to be familiar with these words
- P1
 - To make them familiar with some English words
- P2
 - Conversation, routines, to learn words so as to help them when they go to primary school, giving them a taste of what primary school will be like
- P3
 - To make them familiar with some words
- AB1
 - To make children learn new words
- AB2
 - To make them understand what is the meaning of some words
- AB3
 - To introduce them to new words and sentences
- LP1
 - Because some children are used to it
- LP2
 - It's an English school
- LP3
 - Our school is an English aided school

10 of the 15 teachers said that English should be a compulsory part of the preschool syllabus, because they thought it was important to make the children familiar with English "so as to help them when they go to primary school". In the teachers' discourses, the extent of the pressure that the Standard 1 curriculum exercises on the pre-primary curriculum is felt.

N.4 Teaching decoding skills

Table (24): PSA teachers: Post-observation interview

Do you engage in the following activities:	Yes	No	How often in a typical week?			Please provide examples, where indicated
			Never	Some-times	Often	
• Teach the alphabet?	T1 T2				T1, T2	T1: Daily, through theme, write name of pictures, learn alphabet indirectly. T3: In old times, I never did it. But because they do it here, I also do a bit. More during 3 rd term.
• Play alphabet games?	T1, T2			T1, T3		T1: Write missing letter, recognise similar letters.
• Teach the child to write letters?	T1 T2				T2: 3 rd Term	T1: Through copying. T3: Through drawing.
• Teach the child to recognize the alphabet?	T1 T2 T3				T2: 3 rd Term	T1: Ring alphabet, puzzle. T2: Not all.
• Use ready-made work-books/sheets	T1 T2				T2: 3 rd Term	T1: Related to theme.
• Teach the child to read words in English?	T1 T2			T3	T2: 3 rd Term	T1: Related to theme. T2: Draw and words.
• Teach to write words in English?	T1 T2 T3				T2: 3 rd Term	T1: Related to theme. T3: 3 rd Term. In this school, they do it more often. Depends on the children's background.

N.5: PSA teachers' reading practices

Table (25): Teachers' reading habits

How often do you read the following:	T1	T2	T3
• Books?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
• Newspaper?	Often	Often	Rarely
• Sales Ad?	Sometimes	Sometimes	Never
• Dictionary?	Sometimes	Sometimes, with kids	Sometimes
• Recipes?	Often	Often	Never
• Shopping list?	Regularly	Sometimes	Never
• A card?	Regularly	Never	Sometimes
• Bills?	Regularly	Never	Never

How often:			
• Do you read for pleasure?	Never, I read for information and politics	Sometimes	Sometimes
• Do you read for work?	Sometimes, if I come across any books	When I follow courses	Rarely
• Do/Did you read storybooks for your child?	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rarely
• Does your child see you write?	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes
• Do you buy books for your child?	Often	Often	Never, as the school provides
• Do you buy copybooks, crayons, pentels for your child?	Often	Often	Never, as the school provides
• Do you buy workbooks for your child?	Often – the <i>Rossunally</i> ¹⁴ book	Often	Never, as the school provides
• Do you buy flash cards for your child?	Never	Never	Never, as the school provides
• Do you buy word charts for your child?	Sometimes – when I see them: letters, numbers	Sometimes	Never, as the school provides

N.6 Teachers' beliefs

Table (26): Teachers' (PSA, Pilot Study (PS)) beliefs about the introduction and place of English at pre-primary level

	Agree		Disagree		Unsure	
	PSA	PS (%)	PSA	PS (%)	PSA	PS (%)
Pre-school children are too young to be introduced to languages other than their mother tongue.		13	T1, T2, T3	73		13
Pupils should be introduced to English in pre-primary school.	T1, T2, T3	100				
Pupils would get better results if they were taught English right from pre-primary school.	T1, T2	80	T3			20
Any Mauritian child is capable of learning English at pre-primary school.	T1, T2, T3	53		27		13
Children from English medium schools are at an advantage compared to other children when they enter primary school.	T1, T3	60		7	T2	27

¹⁴ Workbook produced by a Mauritian. Skills-based approach used.

Table (27): Teachers' (PSA, Pilot Study (PS)) beliefs about the status of Kreol at pre-primary level

	Agree		Disagree		Unsure	
	PSA	PS (%)	PSA	PS (%)	PSA	PS (%)
Teachers should use only Kreol in pre-primary schools		0	T1, T2, T3	87		13
It would be desirable to have Kreol as a medium of instruction throughout pre-primary and primary education		20	T1, T2, T3	53		27

APPENDIX O: Extended excerpts

O.1 PSA teachers' use of Hindi/Urdu terms to refer to religious entities

Excerpt O1

Date: 17 February 2005.

Circle-time, all teachers and children gathered in a circle at the beginning of the day.

T2: Joignez les mains, baissez la tête, on va faire la prière. *[Put your hands together, bow your head, we will say prayers]*

Oh God (S) purify my mind (S) Fadillah! and help me (S) to fill it (S) with good thoughts (S) O god (S) purify my mind (S) and help me (S) Non! O god (S) purify my heart (S) and help me (S) to fill it (S) with divine love (S) O god (S) purify my hands (S) and let them work (S) for humanity (S).

T2: La plus petite de la classe, regarde comment elle fait la prière! Regarde! Quand maman fait namaz, quand papa va masjid, on fait comme ça? Regardez cette petite fille là, elle est la plus petite. *[The smallest in the class, see how she is praying! Look! When mother does namaz, when father goes to masjid you behave like this? Look at this little girl! She is the smallest of the class]*

T2: Ecoutez les enfants. Les enfants écoutez moi bien. (taps on the table) Il faut respecter la prière. Les musulmans? Qu'est-ce-que les musulmans font? Qu'est-ce-que tu fais Azhar? Maman pas faire la prière, pas dire moi? Khalil, maman faire la prière? *[Listen children. Children, listen carefully to me. (Taps on the table) We must respect prayers. The Muslims? What do the muslims do? What do you do Azhar? Mother does not say prayers, don't tell me? Khalil, mother says prayers?]*

S: Oui *[Yes]*

T2: Comment maman faire la prière? Non! Maman pas faire namaaz, maman, papa pas faire namaaz? To dire moi non, Azhar? Fadillah, maman fait namaaz? Nuzha, maman fait namaaz? *[How does mother say prayers? No! Mother does not do namaaz, mother, father do not do namaaz? You tell me no, Azhar? Fadillah, mother does namaaz? Nuzha, mother does namaaz?]*

Ss: Oui *[Yes]*

T2: Qu'est-ce-que les hindous fait [sic]? Comment tu fais la prière? Qu'est-ce-que tu dis? Comment on appelle ça? *[What do the hindus do? How do you say prayers? What do you say? How do you call that?]*

S: Namashiva

T2: Oui, on fait namashiva. On fait pooja, non! Et toi, assieds-toi. Il faut respecter la prière. On se met debout tranquille, on pense à Dieu. Allez on va refaire la prière. *[Yes, we do namashiva. We do pooja, isn't it? Eh you, sit down! You must respect prayers. We stand up quietly, we think about God. Come on, we will say prayers]*

T1: Joignez les mains. *[Join your hands]*

T2: On ne va pas danser. On va faire la prière. Regarde Umme, bonne fille. *[We won't dance. We will say prayers. Look at Umme, good girl]*

Recite the English prayers, followed by the usual French song.

Excerpt O2

Date: 10 February 2005

Circle-time, all teachers and children gathered in a circle at the beginning of the day.

T: Ki sane la cause Hindi la maison? Ki sane la so dadi dada cause Hindi la case? [*Who speaks Hindi at home? Whose dadi dada (paternal grandmother grandfather) speaks Hindi at home?*]

S: Moi [*Me*]

T: Bane musulmans cause Urdu, pas vrai? [*Muslims speak Urdu, isn't it?*]

T: A l'île Maurice. Nous sommes des Mauriciens. Nous sommes tous des mauri-? [*In Mauritius, we are Mauritians. We are all Mauri-?*]

S: ciens. [*tians*]

T: Enan plusieurs religions: Catholiques, Hindous, Chinois, Musulmans, Tamil, Telugu et autres encore. [*There are various religions: Catholics, Hindus, Chinese, Muslims, Tamil, Telugu and others*]

O.2 Some extended excerpts**Excerpt O3**

Date: 22.3.05

T1: Où sont vos mains?

Ss: Sous la table

T1: *Quand li en bas la table, zenfants, on dit sous la table. Mes mains (Ss) sont sous la table (Ss). Mes mains (Ss) sont sous la table (Ss). Mettez vos mains sur la table. Mes mains (Ss) sont sur la table (Ss). Sur la table (Ss) sous la table (Ss). Janmesh, où sont tes mains? Miss a dit de mettre tes mains sous la table. Sous la table veut dire? Needee, si tu vas pas suivre, tu vas pas comprendre. Miss a dit de mettre les mains sous la table. Mes mains (Ss) sont sous la table (Ss) sur la table (Ss). Mes mains (Ss) sont sous la table (Ss) sur la table (Ss). Sous la table (Ss) sur la table (Ss) sous la table (Ss). Maintenant on va faire ça en anglais, les enfants. Quand les mains sont sur la table, on va dire **on the table (Ss) on the table (Ss)**. My hands (Ss) are (Ss) on the table (Ss) on the table (Ss). My hands (Ss) are (Ss) on the table (Ss). Maintenant quand nous prend nou la main nou mettre li sous la table, nous dire **under the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss)**. Janmesh - **on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss)** Stand up! (T stands up) **Stand up! You are going to stand on your chair. Stand on your chair.** Mettez vous debout sur la chaise. Mettez vous debout sur la chaise. (*Ss do not react*). Regarde Miss. **I am standing on my chair. On my chair. Allez. On your chair. Stand on your chair. (Children stand on their chair). I am (Ss) I am (Ss) Debout zenfants, sur la chaise. I am (Ss) standing (Ss) on my chair (Ss)** Maintenant vous allez vous mettre sous la table. Mettez vous, mettez vous sous la table. Sous la table. Regardez mes mains. Mes mains sont sous la table. Maintenant vous allez vous asseoir sous la table - vous allez vous asseoir sous la table. Allez rentrez sous la table. **Children go under the table. Kot zot été la, zenfants? Under the table. Under the table. Under the table.** Vous êtes sous la table, en bas la table, nous dire sous la table. Retournez à vos places. Sur on dit **ON**, quand li en bas la table, sous la table, nous dire **UNDER**. Visham, **stand on your chair, on your chair**, sur la chaise, Visham.*

Where is Visham? Visham is standing **ON** his chair. Répétez. **On his chair** (Ss) Visham. Needee, **where is Visham? On his chair.** Sur la chaise. Allez metS toi sous la table maintenant. (S stands on the chair). Non, écoute Miss bien, va sous la table. Quand c'est sous la table, qu'est-ce qu'on dit zenfants?

Ss: Sous la table.

T1: Quand c'est sous la table, comment est-ce qu'on dit ça en anglais - **under** (Ss) Quand c'est sous la table, comment on dit?

Ss: Under

T1: Quand c'est sous la table comment on dit? **Under the table. Under the table** (Ss)

T1 **puts pencil on table:** Où est le crayon?

S: Sur la table.

T1: Le crayon est sur la table. Comment on dit sur la table? **On the** (Ss) **on the table** (Ss). **On the** (Ss) **on the table** (Ss). Où est l'assiette?

Ss: Sous la table.

T1: Sous la table. Comment on dit sous la table? Allez zenfants comment on dit sous la table? Mm? Sur la table on dit **on the table**, sous la table comment on dit? **Un - un - under** (Ss) **under** (Ss). Mettez les mains sur la table. **On the table** (Ss) Sous la table, on dit **under - On** (Ss) **under** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **under** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **under** (Ss). Où est le crayon?

S: Sur la table.

T1: Sur la table. Comment on dit sur la table - Allez cause fort - **on** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **on the table** (Ss) **on the table** (Ss) **on the table** (Ss). Les mains sous la table, **under** (Ss) **under** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **under** (Ss) **on** (Ss) **under** (Ss). Miss ine montré quand ça li lors la table, nou dire **on the table**, Quand li sous la table, quand li en bas la table nous dire **under the table**. Allez Bhavish, **put the pen on the table. Prend li, mette li. Mette sa na la under the table.** Oui. Sarah, **on the table. Put this under the table. Put this on the table, put this under the table.** On a appris sur la table, on dit **on** sur on dit **on**, et sous, **under**, comment on dit? **Under** (Ss). **Put your hand on your head (Demonstrating) Put your hand on your head. Where is your hand? On my head** (Ss) **On my head** (Ss). **My hand** (Ss) **is on my head** (Ss) **Put your hand under the table (little reaction on Ss's part) My hands are** (Ss) **under the table** (Ss). Vous allez dessiner une table, vous allez dessiner un oeuf de pâques sur la table. On fait une table avant. **Draw a table. Under** - Non, écoute Miss bien - sous la table, **en bas la table, under the table.** Dessine un crayon. La table, la, comment li été là? Li comme ça.

Excerpt O3: Translation

T1: *Where are your hands?*

Ss: *Under the table*

T1: *When they are under the table, children, we say under the table. My hands (Ss) are under the table (Ss). My hands (Ss) are under the table (Ss). Put your hands on the table. My hands (Ss) are on the table (Ss). On the table (Ss) under the table (Ss). Janmesh, where are your hands? Miss asked you to put your hands under the table. Under the table means? Needee, if you are not going to follow, you will not understand. Miss asked you to put your hands under the table. My hands (Ss) are under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss). My hands (Ss) are under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss). Under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss). Now, we will do this in English, children. When the hands are on the table, we will say on the table (Ss) on the table (Ss). My hands (Ss) are (Ss) on the*

table (Ss) on the table (Ss) My hands (Ss) are (Ss) on the table (Ss). Now when we take our hand and we put it under the table, we say under the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss). Janmesh - on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) on the table (Ss) under the table (Ss) Stand up! (T stands up) Stand up! You are going to stand on your chair. Stand on your chair. Stand on your chair. Stand on your chair. (Ss do not react). Look at Miss. I am standing on my chair. On my chair. Come on. On your chair. Stand on your chair. (Children stand on their chair). I am (Ss) I am (Ss) Stand children, on the chair I am (Ss) standing (Ss) on my chair (Ss) Now you will go under the table. Go, go under the table. Under the table. Look at my hands. My hands are under the table. Now, you will sit under the table - you will sit under the table. Come on, go under the table. (Children go under the table). Where are you now, children? Under the table. Under the table. Under the table. Under the table. You are under the table, under the table, we say under the table. Go back to your places. On we say on, when it is under the table, under the table, we say under. Visham, stand on your chair, on your chair, on the chair, Visham. Where is Visham? Visham is standing ON his chair. Repeat. On his chair (Ss) Visham. Needee, where is Visham? On his chair. On the chair. Come on, go under the table now. (S goes on Chair). No, listen to Miss carefully, go under the table. When it is under the table, what do we say children?

Ss: Under the table.

T1: When it is under the table, how do we say in English - under (Ss) When it is under the table, how do we say?

Ss: Under

T1: When it is under the table, how do we say? Under the table. Under the table (Ss)

T1 puts pencil on table: Where is the pencil?

S: On the table.

T1: The pencil is on the table. How do we say on the table? On (Ss) on the table (Ss). On (Ss) on the table (Ss). Where is the plate?

Ss: Under the table.

T1: Under the table. How do we say under the table? Come on, children, how do we say under the table? Mm? On the table we say on the table, under the table how do we say? Un - un - under (Ss) under (Ss). Put your hands on the table. On the table (Ss) Under the table, we say under - On (Ss) under (Ss) on (Ss) under (Ss) on (Ss) under (Ss). Where is the pencil?

S: On the table.

T1: On the table. How do we say on the table? - Come on, speak loudly - on (Ss) on (Ss) on (Ss) on (Ss) On the table (Ss) On the table (Ss) On the table (Ss). The hands are under the table, under (Ss) under (Ss) on (Ss) under (Ss) on (Ss) under (Ss). Miss has shown that when this is on the table, we say on the table, when it is under the table, we say under the table. Come on Bhavish, put the pen on the table. Take it, put it. Take this one, put it under the table. Yes! Sarah, on the table. Put this under the table. Put this on the table, put this under the table. We have learnt on the table, we say on, on the table we say on, and under, under, how do we say? Under (Ss). Put your hand on your head (Demonstrating) Put your hand on your head. Where is your hand? On my Head (Ss) On my Head (Ss). My hand (Ss) is on my head (Ss) Put your hand under the table (little reaction on Ss's part) My hands are (Ss) under the table (Ss). You will draw a table, you will draw an easter egg on the table. We draw a table first. Draw a table. Under -No,

listen to Miss - under the table, under the table, under the table. Draw a pencil. The table, there, how is it now? It is like this.

Excerpt O4

Date: 2.9.05

T1: **What is this? What is this? This is a ...**

T3: **A tree.**

T1: **This is a tree. A tree (Ss).** *To pé trouve la Tarun? Tarun! Tu vois. Tu joues avec tes cheveux. A tree (Ss). L'arbre entier, l'arbre on dit a [This is a tree. A tree (Ss) Can you see, Tarun? Tarun! Can you see? You are playing with your hair. A tree (Ss) The whole tree. The tree we say a?]*

S: **Tree.**

T1: **Comment on dit les feuilles? (Pause) [How do we say the leaves?]**

T2: **Hier on a dessiné, on a parlé la dessus. [Yesterday we drew, we talked about it]**

T1: **Feuilles, on dit leaves. Comment on dit les feuilles? Leaves (Ss).** *Comment on dit les feuilles? [Leaves, we say leaves. How do we say leaves? Leaves (Ss) How do we say leaves?]*

Ss: **Leaves.**

T1: **Les branches? Les branches? Branches (Ss) Branches (Ss)** *Tout ça ce sont les branches. Ça comment on appelle ça? Comment on appelle ça? En français, comment on dit ça? [The branches? The branches? Branches (Ss) Branches (Ss). All these are branches. This how do we call this? How do we call this? In French, how do we say this?]*

T3: **En français, allez. [In French, come on]**

S: **Racine. [Roots]**

T1: **Ça c'est pas racines ça. Ça? [These are roots? These?]**

Ss: **Tronc. [Trunk]**

T1: **The trunk (Ss) The trunk (Ss).** *Le tronc. Les racines. Comment on dit les racines? [The trunk (Ss) The trunk (Ss). The trunk. The roots. How do we call the roots?]*

S: **Racines. [The roots]**

T1: **Comment on dit les racines? Roots (Ss) Roots (Ss).** *Regardez Miss a écrit la. Vous pouvez dessiner un arbre comme ça pour Miss. [How do we say the roots? Roots (Ss) Roots (Ss) Look, Miss wrote it here. Can you draw a tree like that for Miss?]*

Ss: **Oui. [Yes]**

APPENDIX P: Code-alternation

P.1 Translation: Equivalence

Extract Number	Date	Examples
1	29.3.05	T2: Vous allez dessiner pour moi, deux circles , deux circles . Two circles [You will draw for me, two circles , two circles , two circles]
2	11.5.05	T1: Bonjour, les enfants [Good morning, children] Ss: Bonjour, Miss [Good morning, Miss] T1: Good morning, children Ss: Good morning, Miss
3	18.5.05	T2: C'est quel jour aujourd'hui, les enfants? [What day is it today, children?] S: Jeudi [Thursday] T2: Très bien. Aujourd'hui c'est Jeudi. Today is Thursday. (Ss) [Very good. Today is Thursday. Today is Thursday (Ss)]
4	31.5.05	T1: On va compter maintenant. We are going to count. One (Ss) two (Ss)... [We are going to count now. We are going to count. One (Ss) Two (Ss)]
5	7.6.05	T1: Dans notre main, nous avons cinq doigts. We have five fingers. [In our hand, we have five fingers. We have five fingers] T1: Rouge: Red, Red [Red: Red, Red]
6	5.7.05	T1: C'est une table. Une table (T and Ss repeat 3 times) A Table (T and Ss repeat twice) [This is a table. A table. A table] T2: Draw a flower under the table (x2). Dessine une fleur sous la table. [Draw a flower under the table (x2). Draw a flower under the table]
7	23.7.05	T2: How do we write number one? Comment on écrit le chiffre un? [How do we write number one? How do we write number one?]

P.2 Metalinguistic awareness: Indirect and direct techniques

Extract Number	Date	Examples
Metalinguistic awareness: Indirect technique		
8	10.2.05	T1 : Comment on dit les yeux? [How do you say eyes?]
9	29.3.05	T3: C'est quoi ducks ? [What are ducks ?]
10	12.4.05	T1 : Quand c'est rempli, on dit full . [When it is full, we say full]
11	18.5.05	T2 : Qu'est-ce-que ça veut dire 'seven days in a week'? Days, c'est quoi? [What does it mean 'seven days in a week'? Days, what is it?]

12	31.5.05	T1 : Comment on dit les animaux? [How do you say animals?] C'est quoi sheep ? [What is sheep ?]
13	5.7.05	T2 : Table c'est quoi?... Flower c'est quoi? [Table, what is it?... Flower , what is it?]
14	26..05	T2 : Maintenant l'arbre, comment on dit ça? [Now tree, how do you say that?]
Metalinguistic awareness: Direct technique		
15	24.2.05	T2: En anglais, comment on dit Jeudi? [In English, how do we say Thursday?]
16	3.3.05	T2: Comment on dit salon en anglais? (x2) [How do we say living room in English?]
17	29.3.05	T1: Lundi (Ss), Mardi (Ss)...Dimanche (Ss). Sept jours (Ss) dans une semaine (Ss) En anglais maintenant. Par quoi on va commencer? [Monday (Ss) Tuesday (Ss)...Sunday (Ss). Seven days (Ss) in a week (Ss). In English now. What will we start with?]
18	5.4.05	T2: La même chose, les enfants, on va faire en anglais. [The same thing, children, we will now do in English]
19	5.4.05	T1: Comment on dit le chiffre deux en anglais? [How do we say number two in English?]
20	12.7.05	T2: What day is today? S: Mardi [Tuesday] T2: En anglais Miss a dit. Non! Miss a posé la question en anglais. [In English, Miss said. No! Miss asked the question in English.]

P.3 Code-mixing: technical/key vocabulary

Extract Number	Date	Example
21	17.2.05	T2: Montrez Miss a big circle. Kot big circle ete?...Allez on va écrire 'big'...[Show Miss a big circle. Where is the big circle?...Come on, we will write 'big'...]
22	24.2.05	T2: Hier, c'était Wednesday. Aujourd'hui? Il y a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, après? [Yesterday was Wednesday. Today? There is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, after that?]
23	3.3.05	T2: Alors, qu'est-ce qu'on va mettre les enfants? The ceiling (Ss) The door (Ss) The window (Ss) The floor (Ss). [So, what will we put children? The ceiling (Ss) The door (Ss) The window (S) The floor (Ss)]
24	17.3.05	T1: Ki number ki bizin match là? [What number must we match here?]
25	5.4.05	T2: Voilà. This is number two. Quel chiffre ça? Allez, on va faire dans l'air number two. [There. This is number two. What number is that? Come on, we will write in the air number two.]

26	3.5.05	T2: Allez on va faire number one...number one , c'est combien? Comment on écrit number one maintenant? [<i>So, we will write number one...number one, how many is that? How do we write number one now?</i>]
27	18.5.05	T3: Le thème s'appelle Parents' Day . [<i>The theme is called Parents' Day</i>]
28	18.5.05	T1: Il y a numbers dedans. Regardez ici, ça c'est quel number ? [<i>There are numbers in there. Look here, this is what number?</i>]
29	24.5.05	T3 : Tu vas colorier l'autre circle rouge. [<i>You will colour the other circle red</i>]
30	14.6.05	T2 : Bon Miss X, tu vas faire la chanson pour Music Day
31	14.6.05	T2: Allez on va écrire ' a red circle ', ' a yellow circle ' [<i>So, we will write 'a red circle', 'a yellow circle'</i>]
32	21.6.05	T1 : On va faire matching : circle va avec circle ; square va avec square . [<i>We will do matching: circle goes with circle; square goes with square</i>]
33	12.7.05	T3 : Alors, qu'est-ce qui est arrivé avec les ducks ? Kine arrive bane ti canards? [<i>So, what happened to the ducks? What happened to the little ducks?</i>]
34	12.7.05	T3: Bon, on va faire un petit peu parts of the body [<i>So, we will do a bit parts of the body</i>]
35	2.9.05	T2: C'est quel number ?...Touchez number three [<i>What number is this ?...Touch number three.</i>]
36	2.9.05	T1: Tout ça ce sont des sets ...là où il y a six on va faire matching ...on va compter les flowers ...[<i>All these are sets...where there are six, we will do matching...we will count the flowers...</i>]

P.4 Code switching: Student-Teacher exchanges

Extract Number	Date	Example
		TEACHER ASKS IN FRENCH, STUDENT(S) REPLY IN ENGLISH
37	24.2.05	T2: Sur quel thème on travaille? [<i>Which theme are we working on?</i>] S: Square
38	5.4.05	T1: Ça ki été ça? [<i>What is this?</i>] S: Circle
39	11.5.05	T1: Là, combien il y a dedans? [<i>Here, how many are there in it?</i>] Ss: One, One
40	24.5.05	T2: Harvin, Combien de rabbits il y a? (x2) (Silence) Combien de lapins il y a? One, Two . Combien de lapins il y a? (x2) [<i>Harvin, how many rabbits are there? (x2) (Silence) How many rabbits are there? One, two. (x2)</i>] S: Two

41	18.5.05	T2: Ça c'est quelle couleur? [What is its colour?] S: Red Ss: Red
42	7.6.05	T1: Quel chiffre il y a sur le pot? [What number is there on the jar?] Ss: One
43	26.8.05	T2: Combien de cubes vous avez retiré? [How many cubes did you remove?] Ss: One
		TEACHER ASKS IN ENGLISH, STUDENT(S) REPLY IN FRENCH
44	17.2.05	T2: What day is today, zenfants? [What day is today, children?] S: Jeudi. [Thursday]
45	11.5.05	T1: How many boats? S: Deux [Two]
46	11.5.05	T1: Where is the bottle? S: De l'eau [Water] T1: Where is the bottle? Où est la bouteille? [Where is the bottle? Where is the bottle?] S: La tête [The head] T1: Comment on va dire? [How will we say?] S: Sur la tête. [On the head]

P.5 Questioning as ELT technique

Extract Number	Date	Example
		T MAKES STATEMENT - T ASKS RELATED QUESTION
47	10.2.05	T1: Ça, C'est les yeux. Les yeux on dit eyes . Comment on dit les yeux? [These are the eyes. Eyes we call eyes . How do we say eyes?] Ss: Eyes T1: Comment on dit les yeux? [How do we say eyes?] Ss: Eyes
48	3.3.05	T2: Le salon, on dit living room. [The living room, we say living room] Ss: Living room T2: Comment on dit le salon? [How do we say living room?] Ss: Living room
49	3.3.05	T2: Ça c'est dining room . C'est quoi? [This is the dining room. What is it?] Ss: Dining room .

50	29.3.05	T1: Sous la table (Ss) Under the table (Ss) Comment on dit sous? Under (Ss) Under (Ss) Under (Ss) [<i>Under the table (Ss) Under the table (Ss)</i> how do we say under? Under (Ss) Under (Ss) Under (Ss)]
		T ASKS QUESTION - T PROVIDES ANSWER
51	10.2.05	T1: What colour is this? Red. Rouge, c'est red. [<i>What colour is this? Red. Red, is red</i>]
52	24.2.05	T2: Comment on va dire notre maison? My house (Ss) [<i>How will we call our house? My house (Ss)</i>] Comment on va dire le mur? The wall (Ss) [<i>How will we say the wall? The wall (Ss)</i>]
53	3.5.05	T1: Comment on dit bonbon en anglais? Sweet (Ss) Sweet (Ss) [<i>How do we say sweet in English? Sweet (Ss) Sweet (Ss)</i>]
		T ASKS QUESTION - T PROVIDES CLUE
54	24.2.05	T2: Comment on va dire la fenêtre en anglais? The win (Ss- dow) [<i>How will we say window in English? The win (Ss- dow)</i>]
55	18.5.05	T2: Comment on dit maman en anglais? Mo? [<i>How do we say mother in English? Mo?</i>] Ss: ther
56	31.5.05	T1: Today is not Monday. Yesterday was Monday. What day is it today? Yesterday, Monday. Today not Monday. Yesterday, Monday. Monday, après? [<i>Today is not Monday. Yesterday was Monday. What day is it today? Yesterday, Monday. Today not Monday. Yesterday, Monday. Monday, and then?</i>] Ss: Tuesday T1: Today is Tuesday

APPENDIX Q: Songs taught at PSA

Song	Lyrics
Today is Thursday	Today is Thursday (Bis), Thursday fish and chips (Bis), All you hungry children (Bis), Come and eat it up (Bis)
See-Saw	See-Saw, up and Down, on the floor, in the sky.
One Little finger	One (two, three...) little finger, tap, tap, tap. Go to the ceiling, go to the door, and lay them on my lap...
National Anthem	Glory to thee, motherland, Oh motherland of mine. Sweet is thy beauty, sweet is thy fragrance, around thee we gather. As one people, as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty. Beloved country, may God bless thee. For ever and ever
Ba Ba Black Sheep	Ba Ba black sheep, have you any wool? Yes sir, Yes sir, three bags full. One for my master and one for my dame and one for the little boy who lives down the lane.
Mummy and Daddy	Mummy and Daddy, I love you. Come to me, when I call you. Give me a kiss, when I ask you. Mummy and Daddy, I love you.
Bingo	My grandfather, he had a dog, and BINGO was his name. B-I-N-G-O (x3) and Bingo was his name.
I am a music man	I am a music man, I come from fairy land. I can play. What can you play? I can play the guitar/piano/trumpet
Head, shoulders	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes, knees and toes, head, shoulders, knees and toes, FaLaLaLa
Emily has a basket	Emily has a basket, a basket, a basket. Emily has a basket, yes a big basket. In the basket, a big ball, a big ball, a big ball, in the basket, a big ball, in Emily's basket.
Five little ducks	Five little ducks went up the hill, up the hill and far away. Mother duck said qwack, qwack, qwack (bis) and only four little ducks came back.
Bits of paper	Bits of paper (bis), Lying on the floor (bis) make the class untidy (bis) come and pick them up (bis)
I put my right hand up	I put my right hand up, I put my right hand down, I put my right hand up, and I shake it all about. I do the hockey-pockey and I turn around, that's what it is all about... (left hand)
Ah Tishoo	Ring-o-Ring-o-Roses, a bouquet full of roses, ah-Tishoo (bis) we all fall down. Picking up the daisies (bis) ah-Tishoo (bis) we all fall down.

APPENDIX R: Teaching mathematical concepts

Table (28): Mathematical concepts in the weekly plans

Mathematical themes	Concepts (dates on which they appear on the weekly plan)
Numbers	One (14-18.3, 2.5, 12.6, 22-27.8); two (4-8.4, 3.5, 12.6, 22-27.8); three (4-6.5, 20.5, 25.5, 27.5, 12.6, 22-27.8); four (30.5-4.6, 27-29.6, 12.6, 22-27.8); five (6-10.6, 11-16.6, 22-27.8); six (28.8-2.9); seven (5-9.9); eight (12-16.9); nine (19-23.9); ten (26 – 29.9)
Colours	Red (7-11.2, 29.6, 7.7); blue (4.3, 29.6, 7.7); yellow (16-20.5, 23-27.5, 29.6); green (29.6)
Shapes	Square (21-25.2); circle (11.2, 14-18.2); shapes (27.6-1.7)
Big/small	14-18.2
Many/few	28.2-3.3
Preposition	On/under (21-25.3, 5-7.7);

Table (29): Teaching mathematical concepts: Daily plans

Date	Activity	Objective	Procedure
21.2.05	Introducing square	Child should be able to identify the square	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. Children play freely with shapes 4. Teacher explains using square shapes
23.5.05	Draw egg [sic] under the hen and feathers on the hen	The child should be able to follow instructions and draw on/under	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. They observe 4. Give instructions to draw
29.8.05	Draw 6 candles	Child should be able to count and draw 6 candles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. They count 4. They draw 6 candles
26.9.05	Copy No. 10	The children should be able to observe and copy number 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. They copy
27.9.05	Sorting of 10 objects	The child should be able to count 1-10 and sort out 10 objects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials (cubes) 3. They count 1-10 4. They sort out 10 cubes

APPENDIX S: Charts on PSA walls

Ready-made Charts	Language	Teacher-made Charts	Language
Colours	English	Birthday chart	English
Alphabet letters and words beginning by them	English	Shapes: 'circle' and 'triangle'	English
		Means of transport: avion, autobus, hélicoptère	French
		Rooms in the house: 'guestroom', 'kitchen', 'bedroom', 'bathroom and toilet'	English
		Functional literacy: Ariel, Blue Magic	Eng/French
		Welcome to XXX School	English
		Uses of water: 'drinking', 'washing'	English
		The weather: 'la vapeur', 'la pluie', 'l'eau', 'le soleil', 'les nuages'	French
		Nutrition: flour and rice, cow, chicken, fruits, vegetables, fish	English
		Tree: roots, leaves, branches, trunk.	English

APPENDIX T: Direct instruction at PSA

T.1 Teaching the alphabet

Table (30): The alphabet: Typology of activities

Activity type	Activity Description	Date
Copy letters	Copy the letter 'a'	8.2.05
	Copy the letter 'b'	14.2.05
	Copy the letter 'c'	1.3.05
	Copy the letter 'd'	17.3.05
	Copy the letter 'e'	5.4.05
Model letters with dough	Model letter 'a'	10.2.05
Ring/Circle letter	Ring 'b'	23.2.05
	Ring 'c'	2.3.05
	Ring 'd'	21.3.05
	Ring 'e'	6.4.05
	Ring the letters	26.8.05
Match the letters	Match 'a' and 'b'	12.2.05
	Match the letters	18.3.05
	Match the alphabets	23.8.05
	Match the letters	26.10.05
Fill in the blanks	Fill in the letter 'a' in 'm-m-n'	20.5.05
	Fill in the letter 'a' in 'm-m-n'	27.5.05
	Fill in the letter 'e' in '-l-phand'	29.6.05
	Fill in the letter 'o' in 'fl-wers'	13.9.05

Table (31): The Alphabet: Sample of daily notes

Activity	Objective	Description	Date
Writing	Copy letter 'd'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Children are around a table Distribution of materials They observe and copy 'd' 	17.3.05
Reading	Ring letter 'c' - the child should be able to identify and ring letter 'c'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Children are around a table Distribution of materials Children observe the alphabets They ring 'c' 	2.3.05

Writing	Matching of alphabets – child should be able to identify and match the alphabets	1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. Children observe and match	23.8.05
Writing	Write the missing letter – the child should be able to write the missing letter 'a'	1. Children are around a table 2. Distribution of materials 3. They observe 4. They write the missing letter	27.5.05

T.2 Word copying

Table (32): Data obtained from weekly plans

Date	English words	Date	French words
COPYING WORDS			
22.2.05	A house	28.2.05, 14.3.05	La cuisine
23.2.05	Dining room	24.3.05	Une poule
22.3.05	Eggs	17.5.05	Ma maman
23.3.05	Easter eggs	18.5.05	<u>Mother's name</u>
4.5.05	Milk, fish, apple	24.5.05	Mon papa
6.6.05	Domestic animals	25.5.05	<u>Father's name</u>
28.6.05	Tiger	31.5.05	Les animaux
6.7.05	Fish	7.6.05	Un chien
11.7.05	Octopus	16.6.05	Le chat, la chatte, le chaton
12.7.05	Tortoise	1.7.05	Un singe
29.8.05	Banana	13.7.05	Le requin
27.10.05	Mango	23.8.05	Une plante
28.10.05	Pine apple	1.9.05	Le jardinier
30.10.05	Pawpaw	5.9.05	Des fleurs
		20.9.05	Les fruits
		22.9.05	Une fraise
		29.10.05	Raisins
30.5.05, 7.6.05, 27.6.05, 4.7.05, 21.9.05	Copy names and surnames		

RING WORDS			
19.5.05	Mother		
9.6.05	Dog		
13.6.05	Cat		
16.7.05, 29.8.05, 23.9.05	Identical words		
6.9.05	Flowers		
MATCH WORDS			
		26.5.05	Papa
	Note: 10.6.05, 28.6.05, 6.7.05, 14.7.05, 7.9.05 : no precision given about the words		

APPENDIX U: Typology of activities for OEIP

Activity	Brief description
SONG	I put my right foot in, my right foot out.... Parts of the body
	Head, shoulders, knees and toes
	Old MacDonald had a farm... (name of animals)
	Ring-O-Roses ...(we all fall down, we all stand up, we all jump, touch our noses...)
	Here we go round the Mulberry bus, this is the way I brush my teeth, wash my hands, wash my face, wash my hair, have a shower, comb my hair, eat my bread/Weetabix, drink my milk, go to school...
	Ba, Ba, Black sheep
	Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
Invented	Butterfly, duck, bird, cat, airplane,
Song + TPR	Shake your hands, shake your feet, clap your hands, wriggle your fingers, tap your feet, hands up, hands down,
TPR	Stand up, sit down, turn around, walk slowly/quickly, run, hop, jump, stop, open the door, shut the door, bring your shoes, put on your shoes, put your hands on your head..., touch X's nose...,
	Teddy bear: "What is your name?" "Are you a boy? Are you a girl?"
	Touch your nose, head, eyes ... (Parts of the body)
	Clap hands: One, two, three...
PICTURE BOOK/ FLASH CARDS ¹⁵ / PICTURE CHART/ ACTIVITIES	Animals: dog, cat, fish, rabbit, duck, butterfly, bird, elephant, cow, snake, tiger, zebra, lion,, giraffe Fruits and vegetables: apple, banana, grapes, orange, tomato, watermelon, pineapple, mango, potato, chilli, cauliflower, cabbage, pepper Transport: helicopter, airplane, van, car, bus, train, bicycle, ambulance, boat, motorcycle, General: flower, egg, biscuits, dress, hat, house, watch, umbrella, chair, table, bed, cheese, star, moon, cake Adjectives: big/small, empty/full, happy/sad, hot/cold
COLOURS- Card game	Red, blue, green, orange, pink, black, white
SHAPES – card game	Rectangle, circle, square, triangle, oval, star
STORY TELLING	The Ugly Duckling ¹⁶
	Goldilocks and the Three Bears
	Spot goes to school
	Where is Spot?
INVENTED STORY TELLING ¹⁷	Afifah has breakfast; Afifah gets ready to go to school Afifah plays in the afternoon

¹⁵ Some were bought ready made, and others were made by hand.

¹⁶ I first told the children in French, and then translated into English. Because of the repetitive nature of the story, it took a few reading sessions for the children to start responding to the English version of the stories. They would tend to join in by crying out the French words that they had initially heard. This led me to tell all other stories directly in English.

APPENDIX V: Tests

V.1 Test 1

Student's Name:.....

School:.....

Test item		Max. Mark	Pre-test	Comments	Post test	Comments
1A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the storybook be read by adult? 	Yes (1), No (0)				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is read on the storybook page? 	If child correctly identifies print (1)				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the textbook be read by adult? 	Yes (1), No (0)				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is read on the textbook page? 	If child correctly identifies print (1)				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the picture book be read by adult? 	Yes (0), No (1)				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is read on the picture book page? 	If child correctly says that there is no print (1)				
	TOTAL 1A	6				
1B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick up the book and pretend you are going to read it 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show me the front of the book 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show me the back of the book 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to the top of the page 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to a picture 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to a word 	2				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point to a letter 	2				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn the pages of the book as if you were reading the book 	2				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a line from the text and ask child in which direction he would read the text 	2				
	TOTAL 1B	13				
1C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KFC 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weetabix 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sunquick 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> La Vache qui rit 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pampers 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pizza Hut 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Magic 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Cow (milk) 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kleenex 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colgate 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jumbo 	1				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peanut Butter 	1				

¹⁷ Because the lack of appropriate books (level of language and relevance), I took pictures of my daughter and used the pictures to write 3 descriptive stories.

	• Cheese –Kraft	1				
	• Blendax	1				
	• Yoplait	1				
	• Coca	1				
	Total 1C	16				
1D	• Looking at a book vs. playing with colourful shapes	1				
	• Listening to a story being read vs. doing a puzzle	1				
	• Playing with building blocks vs. looking at letter/word flash cards	1				
	• Writing down with colour pencils vs. playing with a car	1				
	• Book vs. dough	1				
	• Pencil and rubber vs. toy animals	1				
	• Paper and crayons vs. toy cellular phone	1				
	Copybook vs. puzzle	1				
	TOTAL 1D	8				
1E	• Ask the children to name letters: A to J	10				
	TOTAL 1E	10				
1F	• Ask children to identify the following letters of the alphabet: A, C, F, H, K, L, R, S, V, T	10				
	TOTAL 1F	10				
1G	Write down your name:					
	• No response;	0				
	• Pictures & scribbles;	1				
	• Letter-like forms;	2				
	• Conventional letters;	3				
	• Correctly writing less than 50%;	4				
	• Writing more than 50% of names	5				
	TOTAL 1G	0-5				
1H	• Write down the following letters: E, B, J, P, U, Z	2 X 6				
	TOTAL 1H	12				

V.2 Test 2

School:

Name:

Date of Birth:

Date of Pre-test:

Date of Post-test 1:

General vocabulary in English

	Task description		Marks	Pre-Test	Post-Test
2i	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tongue • Head • Nose • Teeth • Mouth • Shorts/dress • Shoes • Socks 	2 marks each		
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legs • Lips • Finger • Neck • Shoulders • Umbrella • Hat • Shirt 	2 marks each		
			Total: 16 + 16		
2ii	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bed • Tree • Door • Pencil 	2 marks each		
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butterfly • Clock • Biscuits • Eggs 	2 marks each		
			Total: 8 + 8		
2iii	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple • Banana • Cake • Potato 	2 marks each		
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheese • Cabbage • Pear • Tomato 	2 marks each		
			Total: 8 + 8		
2iv	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bird • Cow • Airplane 	2 marks each		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lorry 			
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rabbit • Rat • Boat • Bear 	2 marks each		
			Total: 8 + 8		
2v	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair • Table • Leaf • Moon 	2 marks each		
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse • Helicopter • Duck • Frog 	2 marks each		
			Total: 8 + 8		
2vi	Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish • Grapes 	2 marks each		
	Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pineapples • Cauliflower 	2 marks each		
			Total: 4 + 4		
2vii	Adjectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty • Full • Happy • Sad • Hot • Cold 	2 marks each		
			Total: 12		
2viii	TPR	Clap your hands Hands up Jump Walk	2 marks each		
			Total: 8		

Mathematical vocabulary in English

	Task	Marks	Pre-Test	Post-Test
2i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red • Yellow • Black • Pink 	2 marks each		
		Total: 8		
2ii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue • Green • Orange • Brown 	2 marks each		
		Total: 8		
2iii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star • Square • Oval 	2 marks each		
		Total: 6		
2iv	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rectangle • Triangle • Circle 	2 marks each		
		Total: 6		
2iv	Recite 1 – 10	10 marks		
2vi	Count <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One • Two • Three • Four • Five • Six 	2 marks each		
		Total: 12		

APPENDIX W: Detailed analysis of Tests 1 & 2

W.1 Statistical analyses

➤ Concepts of Print

Are the two groups comparable on the Pre-Test?

- On average, students from PSB ($M=18.6$, $SE=1.05$) performed better than students from PSA ($M=17.54$, $SE=0.76$). This difference was **not significant** ($t(26) = -0.8$, $p > 0.01$).

Did the two groups experience any progress after a year at pre-primary school?

- On average, PSA subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=22$, $SE=0.73$) than on the pre-test ($M=17.54$, $SE=0.77$). This difference was **significant**, $t(12) = -4.94$, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.82$;
- On average, PSB subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=24.4$, $SE=0.75$) than on the pre-test ($M=18.6$, $SE=1.05$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14) = -6.68$, $p < 0.01$, $r = 0.87$;

Did one group perform better than the other on the post-test?

- On average, PSB subjects ($M=24.4$, $SE=0.75$) performed better than PSA subjects ($M=22$, $SE=0.79$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26) = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$ (a medium sized effect $r = 0.4$), but **not significant** at $p < 0.01$.

➤ Interest in literacy related activities

Are the two groups comparable on the Pre-Test?

- On average, PSB subjects ($M=2.6$, $SE=0.35$) performed better than PSA subjects ($M=1.69$, $SE=0.29$). This difference was **not significant**, $t(26) = -1.97$, $p > 0.05$.

Did the two groups experience any progress after a year at pre-primary school?

- On average, PSA subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=2.31$, $SE=0.68$) than on the pre-test ($M=1.69$, $SE=0.29$). This difference was **not significant**, $t(12) = -0.75$, $p > 0.01$;

- On average, PSB subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=3.8$, $SE=0.24$) than on the pre-test ($M=2.6$, $SE=0.35$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14)=-3.06$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.63$;

Did one group perform better than the other on the post-test?

- On average, PSB subjects ($M=3.8$, $SE=0.24$) performed better than PSA subjects ($M=2.31$, $SE=0.68$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)=-2.18$, $p<0.05$ (however, it represented a medium sized effect $r=0.4$), but **not significant** at $p<0.01$.

➤ Letter Naming

Are the two groups comparable on the Pre-Test?

- On average, PSA subjects ($M=8.23$, $SE=2.4$) performed better than PSB subjects ($M=4.73$, $SE=1.4$). This difference was **not significant**, $t(26)=1.3$, $p>0.01$.

Did the two groups experience any progress after a year at pre-primary school?

- On average, PSA subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=18.77$, $SE=1.97$) than on the pre-test ($M=8.23$, $SE=2.4$). This difference was **significant**, $t(12)=-5.83$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.86$.
- On average, PSB subjects performed better on the post-test ($M=23.93$, $SE=1.4$) than on the pre-test ($M=4.73$, $SE=1.4$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14)=-9.46$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.93$

Did one group perform better than the other on the post-test?

- On average, PSB subjects ($M=23.93$, $SE=1.4$) performed better than PSA subjects ($M=18.77$, $SE=1.97$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)=-2.18$, $p<0.05$ (however, it represented a medium sized effect $r=0.39$), but **not significant** at $p<0.01$.

Are the two groups comparable on the pre-test?

- For Pre-Test Level 1, on average PSA subjects ($M=12.92$, $SE=2.83$) performed better than PSB subjects ($M=10$, $SE=1.94$). This difference was **not significant**, $t(26)=0.872$, $p>0.01$;

- For Pre-Test Level 2, on average PSA subjects ($M=4.62$, $SE=1.51$) performed better than PSB subjects ($M=4.4$, $SE=0.92$). This difference was **not significant**, $t(26)=0.126$, $p>0.01$;
- For the Maths Pre-Test, on average PSA subjects ($M=18.92$, $SE=2.42$) performed better than PSB subjects ($M=11.20$, $SE=1.55$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)=0.2.76$, $p=0.01$, and this represented a large size effect $r=0.48$. *However, this advantage was for the students of PSA, who did not undergo the OEIP.*

Did the two groups experience any progress after a year at pre-primary school?

For PSA:

- For Level 1, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=23.85$, $SE=2.3$) than on the pre-test ($M=12.92$, $SE=2.83$). This difference was **significant**, $t(12)= -10.14$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.94$;
- For Level 2, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=17.93$, $SE=2.21$) than on the pre-test ($M=4.62$, $SE=1.51$). This difference was **significant**, $t(12)= -8.458$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.93$;
- For Maths, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=35.08$, $SE=1.6$) than on the pre-test ($M=18.92$, $SE=2.42$). This difference was **significant**, $t(12)= -7.542$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.9$.

For PSB:

- For Level 1, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=49.73$, $SE=0.73$) than on the pre-test ($M=10$, $SE=1.94$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14)= -18.75$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.98$;
- For Level 2, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=42.13$, $SE=1.74$) than on the pre-test ($M=4.40$, $SE=0.92$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14)= -17.81$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.98$;
- For Maths, on average students performed better on the post-test ($M=43.73$, $SE=1.05$) than on the pre-test ($M=11.2$, $SE=1.05$). This difference was **significant**, $t(14)= -17.87$, $p<0.01$, $r=0.98$.

Did one group perform better than the other on the post-test?

- For Level 1, on average PSB subjects ($M=47.73$, $SE=0.73$) outperformed PSA subjects ($M=23.85$, $SE=2.3$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)= -11.37$, $p=0$; this represented a very large effect $r=0.91$;
- For Level 2, on average PSB subjects ($M=42.13$, $SE=1.74$) outperformed PSA subjects ($M=17.69$, $SE=2.21$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)= -8.807$, $p=0$; this represented a very large effect $r=0.87$;
- For the Maths Test, on average PSB subjects ($M=43.73$, $SE=1.05$) outperformed PSA subjects ($M=35.08$, $SE=1.59$). This difference was **significant**, $t(26)= -4.65$, $p=0.01$; this represented a large effect $r=0.69$.

W.2 Qualitative analysis of Test 2 results

Table (33): General English words

In % correct answers	PSA (n= 13)		PSB (n=14)	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
BODY PARTS				
(1) The body-Level 1	22	63	14	97
Tongue	15	77	13	93
Head	8	100	13	100
Nose	54	100	13	100
Teeth	8	77	13	93
Mouth	8	62	0	93
Shorts/Dress	77	8	20	100
Shoes	77	77	40	100
Socks	0	0	0	100
(2) The body – Level 2	5	27	6	77
Legs	0	15	7	73
Lips	0	8	0	47
Finger	8	62	7	80
Neck	0	31	7	67
Shoulders	0	77	7	87
Umbrella	0	31	7	93
Hat	0	15	0	73
Shirt	31	46	13	93
LEXICAL ITEMS – Level 1				
	24	38	20	96
Bed	23	15	7	80
Tree	8	23	27	93
Door	15	15	0	100
Pencil	54	54	53	93
Apple	46	100	60	100

Banana	77	100	40	100
Cake	8	15	14	87
Potato	15	23	27	100
Bird	15	38	7	100
Cow	23	69	27	93
Airplane	8	31	14	100
Lorry	0	0	14	100
Chair	23	46	7	100
Table	23	38	20	100
Leaf	8	15	0	87
Moon	23	8	0	100
Fish	46	85	40	100
Grapes	15	15	7	93
LEXICAL ITEMS – Level 2				
	10	28	10	90
Butterfly	15	38	47	100
Clock	0	15	13	93
Biscuit	0	31	0	100
Eggs	8	0	0	87
Cheese	8	23	7	80
Cabbage	0	8	0	73
Pear	15	8	7	60
Tomato	38	77	38	100
Rabbit	15	77	31	100
Rat	15	62	0	80
Boat	0	31	13	93
Bear	8	15	0	80
Horse	15	15	0	100
Helicopter	8	77	7	100
Duck	15	31	7	100
Frog	0	15	7	100
Pineapple	23	38	0	93
Cauliflower	0	8	0	93

Table (34): Mathematical concepts

In % correct answers	PSA (n=13)		PSB (n=14)	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
COLOURS				
(2i) Colours 1:	13	35	13	90
Red	8	46	13	100
Yellow	31	46	13	93
Black	15	23	27	80
Pink	0	23	7	87
(2ii) Colours 2:	13	57	20	82
Blue	31	77	7	100
Green	23	54	0	87
Orange	0	77	0	87
Brown	0	31	0	53

SHAPES				
2(iii) Shapes 1	36	41	33	71
Star	38	46	47	93
Square	54	46	40	60
Oval	23	23	13	67
(2iv) Shapes 2	41	54	20	58
Rectangle	38	38	23	60
Triangle	23	54	13	47
Circle	62	62	27	87
NUMBERS				
(2v) Count 1-10	82	100	59	100
1-4	100	100	93	100
5	100	100	40	100
6	77	100	60	100
7	69	100	53	100
8	62	100	53	100
9	54	100	53	100
10	54	100	53	100
(2vi) Recognise 1-6	33	100	17	99
1	46	100	27	100
2	54	100	27	100
3	46	100	27	100
4	31	100	27	100
5	31	100	23	100
6	31	100	23	100